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Jamaica

Paris Permenter & John Bigley

VISIT…

Adventure Guide to

Jamaica

5th Edition

Paris Permenter & John Bigley

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HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC,
130 Campus Drive, Edison, NJ 08818
732-225-1900; 800-255-0343; Fax 732-417-1744
www.hunterpublishing.com

Ulysses Travel Publications
4176 Saint-Denis, Montréal, Québec
Canada H2W 2M5
514-843-9882, ext. 2232; fax 514-843-9448

Windsor Books
The Boundary, Wheatley Road, Garsington
Oxford, OX44 9EJ England
01865-361122; fax 01865-361133

ISBN 1-58843-504-0

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Manufactured in the United States of America

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About the Authors

John Bigley and Paris Permenter fell in love with the Caribbean over a dozen years ago and have turned their extensive knowledge of the region into an occupation. As professional travel writers and photographers, the pair contribute travel articles and photographs on the US and the Caribbean to many national consumer and trade publications. The husband and wife team have also written numerous guidebooks.

The writing team are the authors of numerous Hunter guides: *Adventure Guide to the Cayman Islands, Adventure Guide to Antigua, Barbuda, Nevis, St. Barts, St. Kitts & St. Martin, Cayman Islands Alive!* and *Romantic Escapes in the Caribbean*.

Paris and John are also frequent television and radio talk show guests on the subject of travel. Both are members of the prestigious Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) and the American Society of Journalists and Authors (ASJA).

Readers can follow the couple's travels on their websites: Travels with Paris and John (www.parisandjohn.com) and Lovetripper Romantic Travel Magazine (www.lovetripper.com).

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Introduction to Jamaica

This book is divided into two parts. Part one takes a look at those things shared by the entire island: geography, history, flora and fauna, customs, immigration and details that will help you get around, whether that means jumping in an open-air jeep or on a mountain bike.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Finding What You Want 2
- Family-Friendly Pursuits 6
- Discovering Jamaica 8
- Travel Information 52
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This section also includes an overview of the types of adventures available in Jamaica. "Adventure" is a term for you to define based on your own interests, limitations and abilities. We've offered a variety of sporting and eco-tourism options both on and off land. Set your own boundaries in this area. Whether adventure travel means wreck diving or birdwatching, you'll find it covered in the *Adventure* sections.

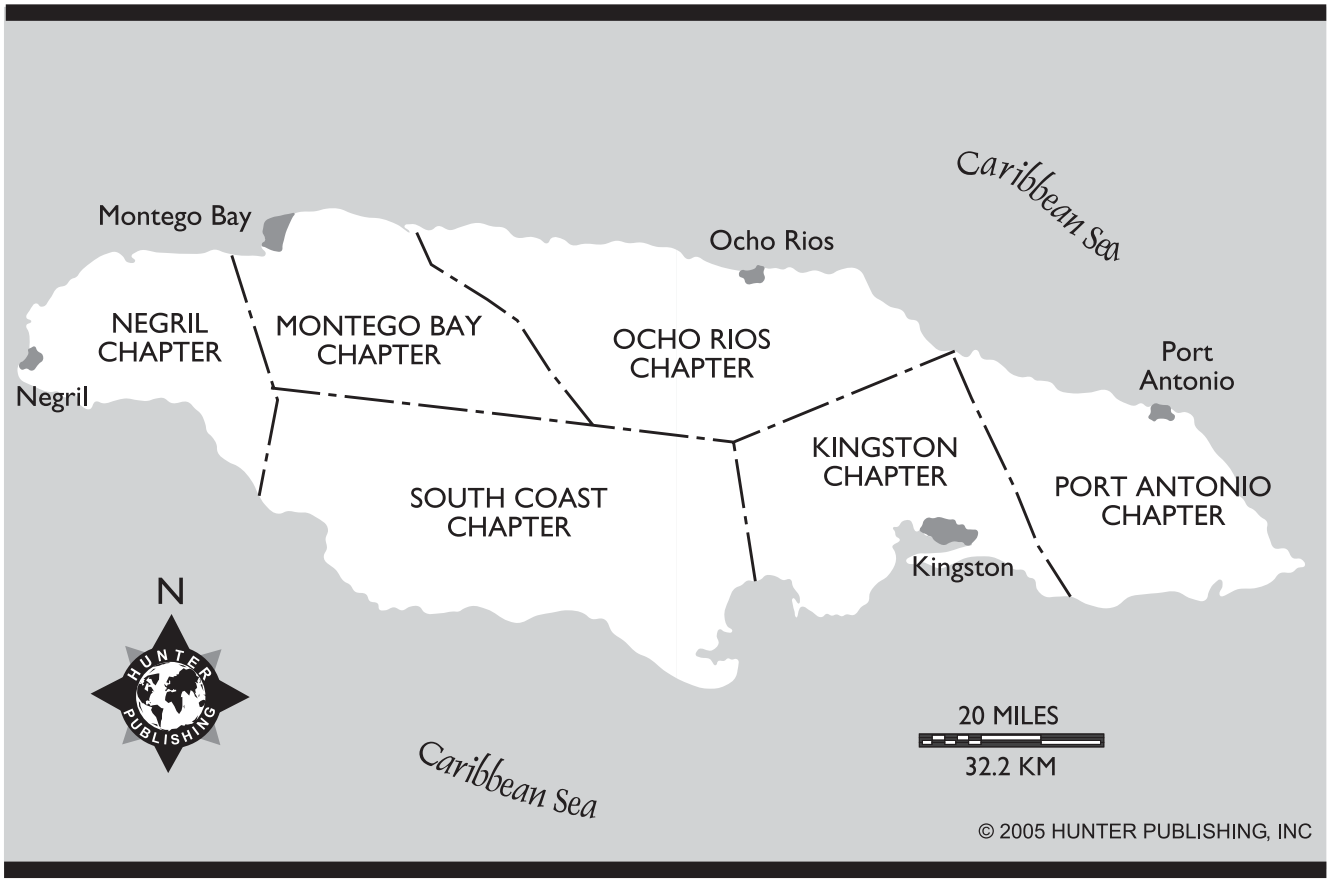
Regardless of the type of activity you choose, know your own limits. Scuba adventures in these waters range from beginners' dives in shallow, placid waters to deep wall and wreck dives. Hikes vary from strolls to sweaty workouts. On the water fun spans the spectrum as well, with some vacationers wrestling marlin while others skip across the sea atop a waverunner or breeze along in a catamaran.

Following this overview of Jamaica, we then take a look at the individual resort areas, including Montego Bay, Ocho Rios (with a section on Runaway Bay), Port Antonio, Negril, the South Coast (including Mandeville) and Kingston. The area-by-area chapters begin with an introduction to the destination, with details on getting around, followed by sightseeing, adventures, accommodations, restaurants, shops and nightlife.

Finding What You Want

■ Sightseeing

Jamaica has plenty of interesting sites, including museums, historic forts and bustling open-air markets. Turn to the sightseeing section for information on how to fill your days with sights.


Caribbean Sea
Montego Bay
Ocho Rios
NEGRIL CHAPTER
MONTEGO BAY CHAPTER
OCHO RIOS CHAPTER
Port Antonio
Negril
KINGSTON CHAPTER
PORT ANTONIO CHAPTER
SOUTH COAST CHAPTER
Kingston
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■ Adventures

We've taken the broad view of adventure travel in this guide. Whether you've arranged a home stay in a mountain village or you're taking it easy at one of the North Coast all-inclusives, you can still be an adventure traveler. In our view, an adventure traveler is one who wants to get out and see more of Jamaica – to meet the people, see what lies beneath the waves, see what is flitting about in the trees, learn more about the island's rich history, sample the island's spicy cuisine, dance to its infectious local sounds. That might be on a short-term basis with an afternoon tour of a community or a park visit, or it might be the focus of your entire trip. That is up to you. What we've done in this book is help pave the way, to show you some of the options. We want you to feel comfortable on our favorite island, and encourage you to schedule some time to explore beyond the traditional stops and get to know the real Jamaica outside the resort gates, if only for a few hours.

There are several excellent guides on the market of special interest to backpacking and budget travelers (we've included those in a bibliography at the end of this book); they offer low-cost lodging options throughout the island. We've taken a middle-of-the-road approach, offering information on all types of accommodations, from elegant all-inclusives to inexpensive inns. From there, we've pointed the way to some of our favorite getaways in Jamaica, from birdwatching to snorkeling to garden strolls.

You'll find a full menu of fun activities in Jamaica, whether you have just a few hours to explore off the beaten path or you're ready to head out on a week-long hike and camping adventure. General island adventures are covered on pages 85-105, and you'll find regional adventures in each chapter. We've divided activities into the following categories:

Adventures on Foot

Hikers will find that Jamaica presents numerous challenges. The rugged terrain of the Blue Mountains attracts many serious hikers, but there's something for everyone. Our *Adventures on Foot* section covers walks, hikes and beach strolls, some of which should be attempted only by serious hikers, others that are great for families with children.

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *If you'll be venturing off the beaten path alone, make sure you inquire about up-to-date information on possible problems or warnings. Also, it's always a good idea to leave your hiking plan with someone if you're striking out on your own.*

Although many of the walks we mention are a good choice for independent travelers, guided walks are also available. We've included the names and numbers of many operators who specialize in hikes and walks. Most can add a lot to the experience, pointing out unique flora and fauna as well as the area's history along the way.

> **NOTE:** *Jamaica follows the British tradition of driving on the left side of the road, so when crossing streets be sure to look right.*

Golf and tennis are also covered in this section. Jamaica is one of the Caribbean's top golf destinations, with plenty of challenges and beautiful courses that take advantage of both the island's rolling terrain and seaside views.

Adventures on Wheels

Along with scenic drives, we've included cycling tours in this adventure section. Mountain bikers will find plenty of challenging terrain here, and a number of organized trips work their way up the Blue Mountains.

Adventures on Water

Watersports, from sailing to windsurfing to sea kayaking, are popular. Many unique opportunities are offered, some of which require skill and training, while others can be learned in a simple lesson onshore. Windsurfers find challenge on the island as well. Surfers and bodysurfers can test their skills at several areas along east end's Boston Bay. Fishing is another favorite pastime. Montego Bay and Port Antonio are well known for their angling opportunities.

Scuba diving is an important feature of many vacations, and the island offers wreck diving, wall dives and reef dives. Top scuba sites for all abilities, from beginner to advanced, are included in the text, along with a list of scuba operators. This section also covers snorkeling destinations throughout the island.

Adventures in the Air

Hopping aboard a prop plane or helicopter and buzzing over Jamaica is a unique way to tour the island and will give you a feel for how remote some regions really are. Parasailing is also a fun activity for the daredevil set. Look for parasailing operators on the tourist beaches of Negril, Montego Bay and Ocho Rios.

Eco-Travel & Cultural Excursions

Birding, watching wildlife and rainforest walks are just some of the eco-adventures you can explore in Jamaica.

The cultural excursions we've featured allow you to learn more about the island's unique culture, from the Maroons to the German community of Seaford Town. We also take a look at daytrips from the resort areas. For the price of a taxi ride, you can leave the modern conveniences of the resorts for a look at the "real" Jamaica just minutes away. We explain more about the history and special features of the unique communities found along Jamaica's roadsides.

Adventures on Horseback

For some travelers, a horseback romp down the beach makes for a perfect afternoon activity. You'll find several stables on the island, as well as world-class polo matches.

HEED THESE CAUTIONS

Regardless of your activity, maintain your fluid levels. At this latitude, temperatures (and humidity levels) soar, draining precious water and minerals from your body. Replenish often. Carry water on all hikes and boating excursions.

Sun, while being one of the island's biggest drawing cards, is also a factor to be closely monitored. Wear a hat and a good (SPF 15 or higher) sunscreen at all times.

■ Where to Stay & Eat

We've provided you with a selection of accommodation and dining options in variety of price ranges. If you're an adventurous eater, you might want to try some food from the jerk pits, but we've also listed fine dining options where haute cuisine dishes will set you back the cost of a day's vacation.

Pricing

Accommodation prices vary greatly by season, soaring to the highest limits from mid-December through mid-April (hitting a real peak the week between Christmas and New Year's), and dropping to a low during summer and fall months.

AUTHORS' TIP: *Call the hotels for the best prices and possible packages that may save you money.*

Accommodation prices are given in the listings for both high and low season, when possible. Prices change quickly, so use these figures only as a general guide.

PRICE CHART	
Note that all prices, unless otherwise noted, are in US dollars.	
ACCOMMODATIONS Prices are per room, based on double occupancy. In the case of all-inclusive properties, prices are per person.	**RESTAURANTS** Restaurant prices indicate the price of a meal, drink and gratuity for one person.
$ = up to $50 per day	$ = up to $15 per person
$$ = $51 to $100 per day	$$ = $15 to $30 per person
$$$ = $101 to $175 per day	$$$ = $30 to $45 per person
$$$$ = over $175 per day	$$$$ = over $45 per person

Family-Friendly Pursuits

If your adventure involves bringing the kids to Jamaica, you've reached a good destination. Along with a multitude of great beaches, the island has plenty of attractions to please young visitors.

■ Anancy Park

Off Norman Manley Boulevard, Negril; open daily, ☎ 876-957-5100. "Anancy was built as an attraction for the local community, as well as visitors," explains founder Dr. Garfield Munroe. "We are delighted to combine a fun environment with a learning experience. Visitors really get a chance to experience the history of Jamaica and have a good time doing it." The park welcomes families with an 18-hole miniature golf course, go-kart racetrack, carousel and power wheels for the youngest visitors. Families can also take a WaterSkeeter pontoon paddleboat onto the small lake and youngsters can borrow a fishing pole right on the premises to try their luck on the well-stocked pond. In spite of its emphasis on fun, the park also offers a look at the nature and culture of the area. A nature trail here features markers that explain more about local plants and a cultural center that features varying programs. "We at Anancy feel

that an existence of a nature park encourages a greater environmental awareness of and appreciation for the surrounding natural resources," emphasizes Munroe.

■ YS Falls

Commonly seen on a daytrip from Negril, these spectacular waterfalls cascade in steps through tropical forest. As spectacular as (and far less crowded than) Dunn's River Falls, YS is a Jamaican attraction that has remained untouched by hassling vendors and long lines. At the top, swimmers enjoy clear waters under a canopy of ferns.

■ Black River Safari Cruise

This 1½-hour tour takes travelers up the Black River, the longest river in Jamaica at 44 miles. The waters here are home to snook and tarpon – some as large as 200 pounds – not to mention crocodiles.

■ Dunn's River Falls

This spectacular waterfall in Ocho Rios is actually a series of falls that cascade from the mountains to the sea. You may climb up the cascading water and you'll often see groups work their way up the falls hand-in-hand like a human daisy chain, led by a sure-footed Jamaican guide (who wears everyone's cameras slung around his neck). Be prepared to get wet and have fun, but don't expect a quiet, private getaway. This is Jamaica for the masses and, no matter what day of the week, the masses do come. At the end of the climb, you'll be deposited in a hectic market for another opportunity to buy crafts, carvings and T-shirts.

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *There are rubber shoes for the kids to rent or we'd suggest bringing an old pair of sneakers or some surf shoes. The climb is a bit much for very young children, but they'll all enjoy a dip in the pools at the bottom of the falls.*

■ Cranbrook Flower Forest

This park in Ocho Rios is one of the island's best choices for families and adventure travelers. The grounds are perfect for a picnic followed by a hike alongside a shady river. The path climbs high into the hills to a waterfall paradise. The day we journeyed here, children were

playing in the river as their mothers did laundry in the shallow water. Other activities include bird watching, pond fishing, croquet, donkey rides and volleyball.

Discovering Jamaica

We arrived at Donald Sangster International Airport under sunny skies. "Your first trip to Jamaica?" the taxi driver asked us. Adjusting to the sudden warmth that blanketed us in mid-winter and the dazzling sunshine, we smiled. "No, we've been here many times." The driver grinned back. "Then welcome home."

Throughout the years, we've been lucky enough to hear that "welcome home" greeting innumerable times, offered up by everyone from taxi drivers and bellmen to market vendors and beach hustlers. This is a country where the residents welcome visitors with pride to their lovely island, a destination that we've adopted as our second home.

For us, Jamaica means adventure. Maybe it's the mountains covered in lush tropical vegetation. Maybe it's the beaches fringed with crystal-clear waters and the promise of bustling marine life just beneath the surface. Or maybe it's the people who really make visitors feel like they're returning home, a home where hummingbirds dart from bloom to bloom, where waters teeming with colorful marine life lie just steps from your room, where the island's own music makes nights pulsate with a tropical beat.

Jamaica was one of our first Caribbean destinations, and so, for us, a trip back to this island is indeed a homecoming. We try to make time for a meal at our favorite jerk joint. Or a stop by our favorite souvenir stand, a bamboo hut painted in Rastafarian colors. And as we drive the sometimes bumpy roads filled with more-than-sometimes wild drivers, we pass by many of our favorite resorts and restaurants, and relive times we've shared in Jamaica over the last decade.

We have to admit, however, that Jamaica is not for everyone. Many travelers, including some fellow travel writers, prefer to skip this island because of the problems that inevitably reveal themselves even to the casual traveler. The island has made the headlines recently thanks to protests brought on by rising gas taxes. Murder rates in the capital city of Kingston have risen. Drugs are a problem, and you will probably be approached by *ganja*-selling entrepreneurs. Although the resorts patrol their grounds and beaches above the high water line, when you step beyond that boundary, be prepared. "I have something special for you" is a frequently used line that you can ward off with a friendly but firm "No, thank you."

But Jamaica has some of the friendliest folks in the Caribbean. Service, even in all-inclusive resorts where tips are not even a question, is generally unsurpassable. Taxi drivers are proud to tell you about the island, and we've even had drivers jump out of the car and pick (legal) herbs and plants along the route as they describe their uses in the Jamaican household.

There are two very different "Jamaicas." One is found in the luxurious hotels and resorts whose slick brochures lure the lion's share of vacationers to the island. Then there's a Jamaica off the beaten path, a place where economic hardships are met with a rambunctious spirit. In this world, days are often spent as they have been for generations, especially in the rural regions of the country. Life goes by at a slow pace, clothes are often washed in the rivers while children scamper in the shallows playing with found objects. Homes vary from cinder block structures to bamboo and tin buildings devoid of running water or electricity. Here transportation is usually on foot, stopping to say hello to neighbors and catch up on the local "labrish" or gossip. Nights may be spent slapping dominoes on an outdoor table with an enthusiasm for the game found nowhere else, dancing to local tunes at a smoke-filled disco, or leaning on a barstool in the open-air, one-room rum shops that dot the island.

> **INTERESTING FACT:** *Jamaica holds the record for number of bars per capita. It also has the highest number of churches per capita, and Sunday is a busy social day for locals.*

Jamaica's motto is "Out of Many, One People," and a quick look around the island confirms its multi-cultural history. The predominantly African heritage has mixed with that of South America, India, China and Europe. Along with multi-ethnicity, you'll see a mixture of city and country life throughout the nation as well. In Montego Bay, commerce with the rest of the world takes place in modern office buildings. Out on the roads that wind their way through the countryside, trade takes place from push carts made of discarded automobile parts. Transportation for many residents means walking (often with a load balanced on their heads) with the grace of ballet dancers.

Along those roads you'll see the diversity of Jamaican life as well. Around one bend lies a palatial home; around another corner a shanty without doors or windows. Towns are frenetic centers of activity, filled with pedestrians, street vendors, colorful fruit markets and neighbors who take time to visit their friends as they go about their daily duties. Although the roads are rushed and filled with endless honking, not out of anger, but as a warning, a hello, or just for the heck of it, Jamaicans often stop their vehicles to talk to someone in the oncoming lane; others politely wait for the conversation to end.

Jamaica's diversity comes from its visitors as well, guests from around the globe who make this tropical island home for a short while. Some of those visitors have become residents, most notably Errol Flynn, Ian Fleming and Noel Coward.

FAMOUS FACES

Errol Flynn came to the island in the 40s and remained until his death in 1960, but not before he hit upon the idea of putting tourists on bamboo rafts on the Rio Grande, which today remains one of the most romantic rides in the Caribbean. **Ian Fleming**, creator of the James Bond series, wrote from his home, "Goldeneye," in Oracabessa near Ocho Rios. Today the home is owned by **Chris Blackwell**, founder of Island Records. **Noel Coward** came to the island and built his home named "Firefly" near Port Maria.

■ History

The **Arawak Indians**, early residents who arrived from South America around 650 AD, named the island Xaymaca or "land of wood and water." They lived peacefully on the land and the sea's bounty.

Jamaica, the Caribbean's third-largest island, was visited by **Christopher Columbus** in 1494 on his second voyage to the New World. When the **Spanish** arrived later, they were welcomed by the Arawaks, inventors of the hammock. In return, the Indians were executed or taken as slaves. The only thing that remains of this race the name they gave to the island.

IN SEARCH OF THE PAST

In 1692, an earthquake struck the city of Port Royal, located on a peninsula near Kingston, and the entire city was lost to the sea. Today, efforts are underway to recover artifacts of what had been termed "the richest, wickedest city in Christendom."

The Spanish lost the island in 1655 to the **English**. Soon, slavery increased as sugar became a booming industry. During these years, the English tried to tame an area of the island in the Blue Mountains that they nicknamed "the land of look behind." In this little-traveled region of Jamaica's interior, soldiers feared attack by the **Maroons**, descendants

of slaves who had escaped from the Spanish. Soldiers always rode two to a horse, one looking forward and one backward, in order to protect themselves. In 1739, the British gave the Maroons autonomy, and even today they retain a separateness from Jamaican authority.

In 1834, slavery was abolished, but the the sugar industry continued. Later it was joined by the banana industry, and at the turn of the century visitors began to arrive aboard those banana boats. The tourism business grew to become Jamaica's most important form of income.

After the abolition of slavery, Jamaica's plantation owners looked for another source of labor. From 1838 to 1917, over 30,000 Indians immigrated to Jamaica, followed by about 5,000 Asians from 1860 to 1893 who came as indentured laborers. They were also joined by immigrants from the Middle East, primarily what is now Lebanon (although, in Jamaica, these residents are known as "Syrians.")

Jamaica has been an independent nation since 1962.

Timeline

600-1000 AD: Arawak Indians arrived in Jamaica from South America

1494: Columbus made his first visit to Jamaica

1503-1504: A shipwreck strands Columbus on the island's north coast during the explorer's fourth expedition. The explorer stays at Santa Gloria, now St. Ann's Bay.

1509: The first Spanish colony is established in Jamaica in what is now St. Ann's Bay.

1513: Enslaved Africans arrive in Jamaica.

1520: Jamaica begins to cultivate sugarcane.

1598: The Spanish governor proposes a separate area for the Arawak Indian population, which was quickly diminishing due to disease and hard labor conditions. The proposal fails.

1655: British troops invade and take over Jamaica. No Arawaks remain alive on the island.

1656: British colonists settle at Port Morant; most die from disease.

1670: Peace of Madrid officially puts Jamaica under British rule.

1678: First mention of slave uprising.

1690: First significant slave uprising in Clarendon; many slaves escape into Cockpit Country.

1690-1739: First Maroon War fought across the island as British fight Maroons.

1692: Port Royal suffers a catastrophic earthquake and thousands die.

1760: Slave uprising in St. Mary led by Tacky, a runaway slave.

1795: Second Maroon War.

1831: Hanging of Sam Sharpe, leader of last great slave rebellion, in Montego Bay.

1834: Slavery brought to an end. For four years after this event, slaves had to work without pay.

1835: Small groups of Germans arrive in Jamaica in Seaford Town.

1838: Slavery officially abolished in Jamaica.

1838-1917: Large migration of Indians into Jamaica.

1860-1893: Large migration of Chinese into Jamaica as indentured workers.

1960: Tourism industry begins.

1962: Jamaica becomes independent country.

1980: Elections result in hundreds of deaths in violent protests across island.

1988: Hurricane Gilbert hits Jamaica.

■ Geography/Land

Jamaica's geography is, unlike that on some of its Caribbean neighbors, diverse. While many tropical islands are flat and featureless, Jamaica is large enough to have a full menu of topographical features – mountains, waterfalls, rivers, forests, plains, caves, bays, beaches.

Rivers

The island covers over 4,000 square miles. Mountains run like a backbone down the center from east to west, and along the journey they create a quiltwork of 160 rivers and cascading waterfalls. The largest river on the island is the **Black River**, navigable for about 25 miles. Other significant rivers include the Rio Cobre, the White River, the Rio Grande, and the Lethe.

Mountains

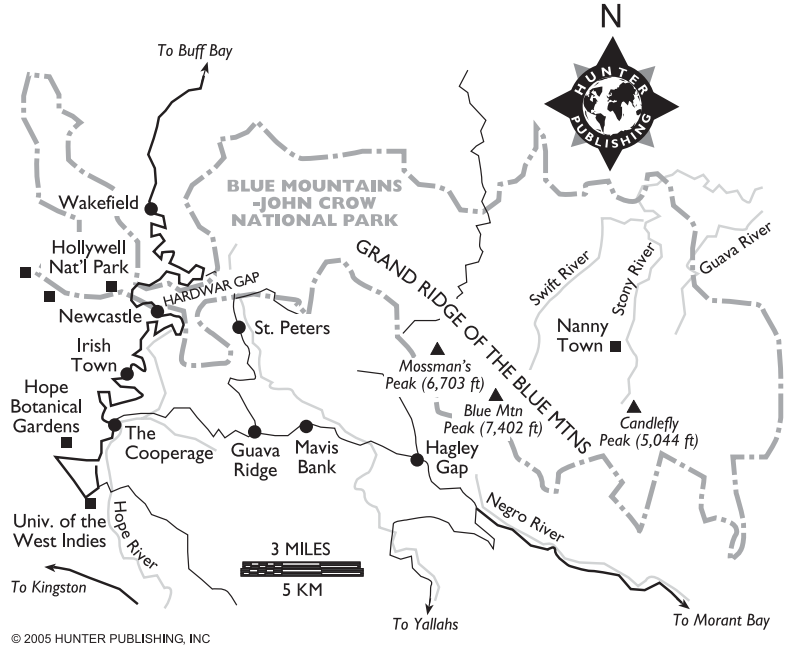
The most mountainous, unsettled area is the eastern end, location of the **Blue Mountains**. The mountains form the boundary between the Portland and St. Thomas parishes, running for about 50 miles. It's here that the famous Blue Mountain coffee is grown, and it's also where you'll find

the world's second largest butterfly, the *Papilio homerus*. Formed by an uplifting of a limestone plateau, the mountains include a look at the exposed strata below. Peaks top 7,500 feet above sea level, and visitors often find themselves grabbing for a jacket in the cooler air.

The mountain system is actually two ranges. In the northern section – called the **Central Range** – lies the highest point, **Blue Mountain Peak**, at an elevation of over 7,400 feet. The second range, called the **Port Royal Mountains**, rises above the Liguanea Plain just north of Kingston.

The **John Crow Mountains** are the largest limestone range in the country. Although their name may not be as recognized as the Blue Mountains, these landforms rise from the northeast of the island between the Caribbean Sea and the Rio Grande.

The Blue Mountains



Caves

Limestone accounts for the great number of caves found in Jamaica. Karst, a limestone terrain marked by sinkholes and underground cav-

erns, is found near the Cockpit Country, the region in the island's interior that remains as untamed as it was in the days of the Arawaks.

> **INTERESTING FACT:** *This rugged terrain is primarily home to the **Maroons**, descendents of runaway slaves who took to the hills and settled the village of Accompong.*

Communities

Jamaica is also a patchwork of communities. The capital city is **Kingston** on the south shore, a metropolitan area that's visited primarily for business rather than pleasure. The resort communities lie on the north shore. Quiet **Port Antonio**, once a hideaway for Hollywood stars, lies to the east. Heading west, the garden city of **Ocho Rios** is popular with couples. **Montego Bay**, or Mo Bay, is the first taste most visitors have of the island as it's the home of the north shore airport. To the far west, **Negril** was once a hippie haven, but today it's a delightful vacation spot with a laid-back atmosphere and unbeatable sunset views.

FAST FACTS	
Size	4,411 square miles
Length	146 miles
Width	22-51 miles
Average Temp.	82° F
Average Rainfall	78 inches annually
Population	2.5 million total *Kingston, 800,000; Montego Bay, 82,000; Mandeville, 13,681; Port Antonio, 10,426; Ocho Rios, 5,851; Negril, 1,166*

Agriculture

Jamaica is incredibly lush and fertile. Fruits, orchids, bromeliads, hardwoods and ferns all thrive in this rich soil and bountiful environment. **Sugar** remains a major product, and during the summer months don't be surprised to see fires across the island as farmers burn off the stubble of harvested crops. During this time, the air sometimes becomes heavy with smoke and burnt sugar.

■ Climate

Temperatures

The average annual temperature is 82°, but expect temperatures to be hotter during afternoon hours (and feel much hotter because of high humidity levels). Fortunately, the island is blessed with northeasterly trade winds that keep you from sweltering no matter what time of year.

CLIMATE CHART (Kingston)

Month	High/Low (F)	Rain Days
January	86/67	3
February	86/67	3
March	86/68	2
April	87/70	3
May	87/72	4
June	89/74	5
July	90/73	4
August	90/73	7
September	89/73	6
October	88/73	9
November	87/71	5
December	87/69	4

Hurricanes

Mention weather and the Caribbean in the same sentence and, quite predictably, the topic of hurricanes arises. These deadly storms are officially a threat from June through November, although the greatest danger is during the later months, basically August through October. (September is the worst.)

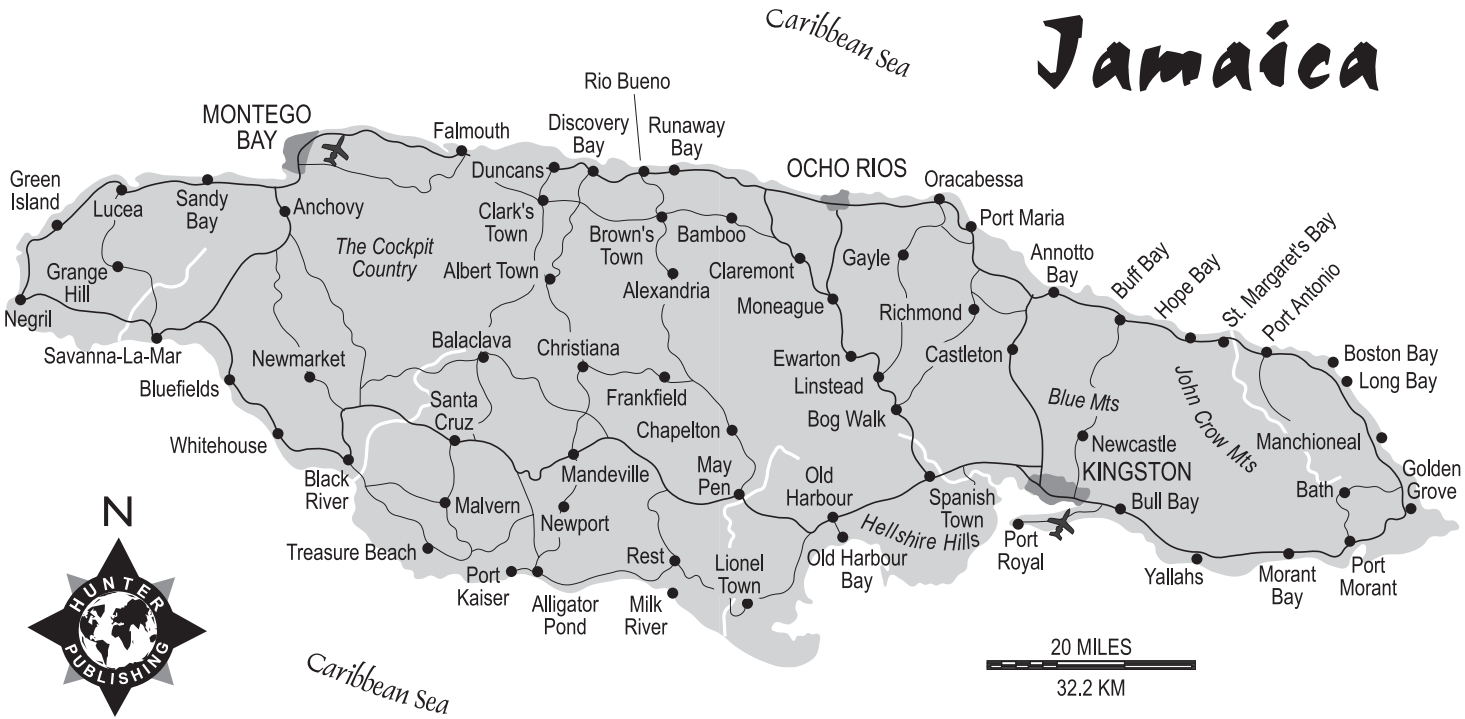
Hurricanes are defined as revolving storms with wind speeds of 75 mph or greater. These counterclockwise storms begin as waves off the west coast of Africa and work their way across the Atlantic, some eventually gaining strength and becoming tropical depressions (under 40 mph) or tropical storms (40-74 mph). Excellent warning systems keep islands posted on the possibility of oncoming storms.

HURRICANE CATEGORIES		
Atlantic hurricanes are ranked by the Saffir-Simpson intensity scale to give an estimate of the potential flooding and damage. Category Three and higher are considered intense.		
CATEGORY	**WINDS** (mph)	**DAMAGE**
One	74-95	*Minimal:* Damage primarily to shrubbery, trees and foliage.
Two	96-110	*Moderate:* Considerable damage to shrubbery and foliage. Some trees blown down. Some damage to roofing materials.
Three	111-130	*Extensive:* Foliage torn from stress; large trees down. Some structural damage to buildings. Mobile homes destroyed. Coastal flooding.
Four	131-155	*Extreme:* Complete failure of roofs. Major beach erosion. Massive evacuation of all homes within 500 yards of shoreline. Hurricane Andrew, which hit South Florida in 1992, was a "Force Four."
Five	155+	*Catastrophic:* Some complete building failures. Low-lying escape routes inland cut off by rising water three to five hours before the hurricane's "eye" arrives.

Rainfall

Rainfall varies with the season. Overall, the island gets an average of 78 inches a year (one look around at the lush vegetation and you'll see that it's put to good use.) The lion's share of the rain falls in the misty Blue Mountains, source of some of the world's best coffee. Usually along the coast, rain showers are brief and heavy, coming in mid-afternoon and clearing up before you can run inside. The rainiest months are May and October.

INFORMATION SOURCE: *Want to find out the weather forecast for your visit? Check out the Jamaica Tourist Board's website:* ***www.visitjamaica.com****.*



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■ Flora & Fauna

Plant Life

Jamaica is one of the lushest islands in the Caribbean, with an amazing collection of flowering plants and fruit-bearing trees gracing its mountainsides, cliffs and countryside.

> **INTERESTING FACT:** *In the Cockpit Country, over 100 plant species are found that grow nowhere else on earth.*

Here's a sampling of some of Jamaica's plants:

Mountain Pride: This tree sports pink flowers and usually grows on limestone ledges. It blooms at an age of eight to 10 years, then dies. The tree has an interesting legend: an Arawak princess threw herself over a cliff when her groom was poisoned by the village priest. Every so often, the "princess" reappears with a palm skirt and pink feathered crown on the high ledges.

Prince Wood: This shrub has gold flowers. There are two endemic species of Prince Wood.

Tree Fern: Yes, these ferns grow to the size of trees. Found in the rain forest, they can reach 30 feet tall.

Water Hyacinth: This plant is sometimes a problem in Jamaica. It was brought to the island from Brazil and has thrived – so much so it now clogs some waterways.

A PLENTIFUL BOUNTY

Jamaica is home to: the largest rain forest in the Caribbean; over 3,000 flowering plants; the second-smallest bird in the world; the largest species of swallowtail butterfly.

■ Edible Plants

Around every bend, you'll see brilliant trees filled with fruits and blossoms. Below the trees, vegetables thrive in the rich soil. Jamaica's wealth of spices are also harvested throughout the island, flavoring Jamaica's best-known dishes with flavors such as cinnamon, vanilla and cocoa.

Here's a sampling of the many fruits, vegetables and spices that grow throughout the island. You'll see many of these as you tour; others are far more difficult to identify and are best seen in the colorful open-air markets (often called wayside markets or "bendung" markets by Jamaicans) that dot the island.

Ackee. This is the essential ingredient in the national breakfast dish of Jamaica, ackee and saltfish. This small, innocent-looking red fruit grows on a large evergreen tree. Originally, it was brought over from Ghana.

WARNING: *The ackee must be picked by someone knowledgeable; in its unripened state the fruit is deadly. Only when the red fruit pops open to reveal black seeds inside is the fruit safe to eat.*

Alligator pear. This is what we call an avocado, but Jamaican patois refers to it as the alligator pear, a term also used in the southern US. It's also sometimes called "poor man's butter" because it was a substitute for those who couldn't afford butter or refrigeration.

Allspice. The common term for what in Jamaica is known as pimento (see below).

Almond. Almond trees, originally from India, are found everywhere except in the mountains.

Arrowroot. The tuber vegetable is cooked and eaten or ground and used as a flour. Used by the Taino Indians, the arrowroot flour can also be used much like cornstarch to thicken soups and sauces.

Bamboo. Bamboo grows amazingly fast (many say you can literally watch it grow). Surprisingly, bamboo is not a major ingredient in traditional homestyle Jamaican cuisine. However, tender bamboo shoots are used in Chinese dishes.

Banana. The banana is a plant, not a tree, bearing only one bunch of bananas before it is cut down to allow a new shoot to develop. Bananas are especially profuse in the eastern reaches of Jamaica near Port Antonio, but look for banana plants in yards throughout the island.

Bayleaf. These dried leaves flavor many soups and stews; they are also used to make Jamaica's most common men's cologne: bay rum.

Breadfruit

Breadfruit. Breadfruit is an all-purpose fruit suitable for boiling, roasting, frying and more. The giant green fruit came to Jamaica thanks to Captain Bligh (yep, of *Mutiny on the Bounty* fame). Breadfruit is a popular side dish.

Calabeza. This is the West Indian pumpkin, a small, nonsweet vegetable that is used like an acorn squash in soups and stews.

Callaloo. This leafy vegetable resembles spinach and is used similarly. Don't miss the callaloo soup, usually spiced up with saltfish. The vegetable originally comes from India, but is seen throughout the Caribbean these days.

Carambola. The carambola is often called starfruit, a reference to its distinctive shape, which is easily visible when cut in cross section. This waxy fruit can be eaten raw, either sliced or in a fruit salad.

Cashew. Cashew nuts grow as the fruit of a tall tree, which is often up to 40 feet high. The nut is part of a two-part fruit: an orange section that is edible and the heart-shaped nut.

Cassava. The early Indians of the Caribbean, the Taino, first used this root, or yucca, to make flour. Also known as tapioca, cassava is poisonous until it is processed to remove the prussic acid. Today cassava is used to make a Jamaica bread called bammy and cassava pone, a heavy baked pudding.

Cho-Cho. This member of the squash family is known as chayote or christophene on some islands. It can be served boiled or used in dishes.

Cinnamon. Cinnamon comes from bark on a tree imported to Jamaica in the late 1700s.

Cocoa. Cocoa (or cacao) trees grow on steep slopes and feature huge pods. The tree is an evergreen often found in the shade of another, larger tree. Look for reddish pods which hold the cocoa beans, used to produce chocolate and cocoa butter.

Coconut. The coconut is an integral part of Jamaican diet, with everything from its milk to its meat to its brown shell being put to use. Look for signs for "jelly coconut" for sale as you drive the countryside. These young coconuts offer a taste of sweet goodness. Coconut milk is often used to flavor rice and peas, the number one dish of Jamaica.

Dasheen. This root vegetable, called taro in the Pacific countries, is used much like a potato as an ingredient in soups. Sometimes it is also called a coco yam.

Garden egg. This is the Jamaican name for an eggplant.

Ginger. The taste of ginger is the taste of Jamaica: sweet with a burn. Ginger is a showy plant, with bright green leaves and long, conical flowers like a colorful plume.

Guava. This small green fruit is used in many Jamaican desserts, such as ice cream, fruit sauces, jellies and more. Usually the fruit has been blended to eliminate dealing with its many seeds.

Guineps. This small green fruit looks somewhat like a small lime. To eat one, pop the flesh out from the skin and suck on it (don't eat the seed). Young boys often sell guineps by the side of the road.

Gungo peas. These brown peas, also known as Congo peas or pigeon peas, are used in soups or rice. They are common throughout the island near the holiday season.

Irish potato. The Irish potato is the white potato, not to be confused with either a yam or sweet potato.

Lime. Lime trees grow in profusion in Jamaica and their juice makes its way into many local recipes.

Mammee apple or mammee fruit. This unusual fruit can be tough to find in the markets. Eaten raw or used as a filling, the mammee apple has the taste of a mango and peach combined.

Mango. The mango is always present on Jamaica buffets. It is used in many desserts or, in its green stage, in chutneys and stews.

Nutmeg. The tree grows naturally throughout the island and produces a seed, called the nutmeg. The red stringy covering around the seed is called mace.

Okra. This vegetable of African origins is used in many stews and soups.

Ortanique. This hybrid of the orange and the tangerine was developed in Mandeville in the 1900s.

Otaheiti apple. This apple looks like a small, red pear. It was introduced to Jamaica from Tahiti by the crew of the *Bounty*, and today you'll see it on many breakfast buffet spreads.

Pawpaw (papaya). Jamaicans call the papaya a pawpaw and the product of the exotic-looking papaya tree (tall as a coconut with wide leaves similar to a fig) is found in desserts, juices, and other menu items.

Peanut. The peanut holds an esteemed place in Jamaica and can be served blended into a drink, as a sauce, or just as a roasted snack. Peanut vendors are often seen in the markets.

Pimento. Pimento, called allspice in other parts of the world, is a star among Jamaican spices. Without the pimento, Jamaica would not have jerk, that delightful side-of-the-road dish that has moved from fast food to gourmet status. Jamaica is the world's largest producer of pimento, a tree that grows naturally in the Caribbean. Even the first Spanish explorers in the early 1500s commented on this tree, which produces aromatic berries and leaves. Those first explorers gave the tree its name, which comes from the Spanish word *pimienta*, pepper or peppercorn. The wood of the evergreen tree is used in the cooking of jerk and the berries are crushed to create a marinade for the spicy dish.

Pineapple. Pineapples have been growing in Jamaica since the days of the Taino Indians. Today vendors sell pineapples on the beach, opening them with a few quick slashes of the cutlass.

Plantains. Don't get plantains mixed up with bananas. They may look similar, but the plantain is not an overgrown banana and tastes nothing like its sweet cousin. Plantains are used in recipes like a potato and are often served sliced and fried.

Pumpkin. Unlike our sweet pumpkin, this West Indian pumpkin is a small, nonsweet vegetable that is used like an acorn squash.

Scotch bonnet. Ah, beware the Scotch bonnet. This innocent-looking little pepper, a small orange bulb, contains the fire of Jamaica. Used in sauces, jerk sauce, and sometimes alone, a little Scotch bonnet goes a long way.

Sorrel. If you visit a Jamaican home or office during the Christmas season, expect to be served this wonderful drink that can be presented with or without alcohol. It is made from sorrel petals, the *Hibiscus sabdariffa*, an annually blooming plant that matures in December. The red stems and sepals are used to make the sorrel drink or jelly.

Soursop. This green frui, left, t is used to make drinks, ice cream and other desserts.

Star apple. The local fruit is the main ingredient in a popular holiday dish called matrimony, when it's mixed with oranges. Similar to an orange and about the same size, the star apple is made up of clear segments. Slice through it to see the eight-pointed star.

Sugarcane. You can't miss the sugarcane fields, which cover many acres of land.

Sweet potato. The sweet potato is a favorite Jamaican offering. Not to be confused with the yam, which, in Jamaica, is not a sweet vegetable but a starchy potato.

Tamarind. Jamaicans make a delightful tamarind juice, prepared from the brown pods of the tamarind tree. Tamarind is also an important ingredient in many folk medicine remedies.

Ugli fruit. The ugli fruit is easy to spot because it is so, well, ugly. This bumpy citrus fruit looks like an old grapefruit.

Vanilla. The vanilla bean comes from the vanilla plant, an orchid.

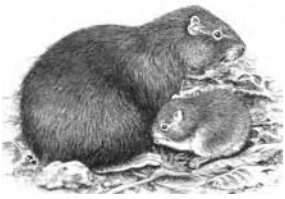
Yam. There are yellow yams, white yams and yampee, a smaller variety.

Animal Life

Jamaica doesn't have a great deal of animal life (except its bird population). Some interesting residents include:

Grass snake. There are no poisonous snakes in Jamaica but you might see the harmless grass snake. The numbers of this snake, which feeds on frogs and lizards, have been reduced by the mongoose.

Jamaican crocodile. Endangered since 1971, these are most often seen along the Black River on the island's South Coast.



Jamaican hutia (coney). Sometimes called the mountain rabbit, the hutia, left, is the only surviving Jamaican land mammal other than the bat.

Jamaican iguana. The status of this endangered species is uncertain, with only a few specimens believed to remain near the town of Healthier. Mongoose often eat the eggs of the Jamaican iguana.

Manatee. These gentle creatures, also known as sea cows, are found only along the South Coast at a spot called Alligator Hole.

Mongoose. Nine mongooses were imported from India in 1872 to rid the sugarcane fields of the rats. Unfortunately, the rat and mongoose keep different hours, and the mongoose feeds on the snake, which is the natural predator of the rat. Thus, the rat population is going strong. Today mongooses can be seen scampering across the roads throughout Jamaica.

Whistling frogs. You'll hear the whistle of these tiny residents as you travel around the island, but you'll probably never see these small frogs. Several species are found only in the Cockpit Country.

Bird Life

Jamaica is a birder's paradise, with 27 endemic bird species, including the vervain hummingbird, the second-smallest in the world. The Blue Mountains are a great destination for birdwatchers and nature lovers, who can follow a series of trails through the range.

📖 One of the best guides to Jamaica's feathered residents is ***A Field Guide to Birds of the West Indies*** by James Bond (yep, his name was the inspiration for the 007 character). You'll also find several small paperback guides at area bookstores on the island.

Bananaquit. This small bird is found throughout Jamaica and has a distinctive yellow-and-black coloration. True to its name, the bananaquit feeds mostly on nectar and so is usually found around flowering plants.

Brown pelican. If you're staying at a beachfront hotel, don't be surprised to see a resident brown pelican working the waters just off the coast. In Negril, we once enjoyed watching a pelican every day of our stay hunting in the clear waters, diving into and scooping up fish in his pouched bill, ignoring the humans on the nearby beach. The pelican is sometimes known by its local name, Old Joe.

Cattle egret. A fairly recent immigrant to Jamaica, these large white birds are typically seen accompanying cattle in the fields where they feed on insects disturbed by the grazing cattle.

Greater Antillean grackle. This grackle resembles its North American counterpart both in its appearance and its behavior, but is somewhat smaller. It is glossy black with startling yellow eyes. The grackle is very urbanized, sometimes making a pest of itself around resort dining areas by begging or stealing food from tables. This bird is usually called the "cling-cling" in Jamaica and is also known as the "shine-eye."

Ground dove. Sometimes called "duppy birds" by locals, these small doves are seen everywhere. Look for a slightly pinkish belly. The ground dove tends to gather in small flocks of two to four birds.

Jamaican oriole. This colorful bird is endemic to Jamaica, although it resembles other orioles with its yellow and black plumage and in the construction of its hammock-like nest. Its main diet consists of insects, although it also favors fruit; hence its popular name of "banana bird."

Jamaican owl. This small owl is generally found in rural areas, although it will often roost near a home. It can measure as tall as 12 inches and is adorned with the familiar hornlike tufts of feathers atop its head. It is also called the brown owl or "patoo."

Jamaican parakeet. This small colorful bird frequents rural areas where chattering flocks can sometimes be spotted around gardens or cultivated fields. Its brilliant green color and distinctive parakeet shape make it easy to identify.

Magnificent frigatebirds. The black frigatebird, or Man-of-War bird, has a wingspan of over seven feet. It is fairly easy to spot, with wings sharply angled like boomerangs. Frigatebirds soar high over the sea and are aggressive to other birds, often hitting the red-footed booby in flight in an attempt to make it disgorge its food and provide an easy meal.

Mango hummingbird. This is one of three hummingbirds found only in Jamaica. Shown at left, it is fast-moving, but you might be able to spot it feeding on banana blossoms. Just six inches long, the mango hummingbird is a bronze-purple tone.

Red-tailed hawk. These large birds are solitary predators which sometimes hunt chickens around towns and villages (hence their common name of chicken hawk). But their main diet consists of rats and birds. Their most distinctive feature is a broad tail, which appears dark red when in the sunlight.

Sparrow hawk (locally "killy-killy"). This small predator, right, thrives on lizards, insects and smaller birds. It can often be seen perched on a

roadside fence or tree branch and can be identified by its long, straight tail, brownish back and hooked bill.

Streamer-tailed hummingbird. This hummingbird is usually known by locals as the doctor bird, and is Jamaica's national bird. Although its body is only four or five inches long, its graceful tail extends another eight to 10 inches. We've frequently watched the doctor bird visit flowering plants in the lush resort gardens, but it has been spotted all over the island.

Turkey vulture (commonly called the John Crow). This large vulture is found in all parts of the island. It has a bald pink head and dark brown or black feathers. Turkey vultures can reach over two feet in length and are usually spotted circling high overhead as they search for dead animals on which to feed.

Vervain hummingbird. This tiny bird is often mistaken for an insect, hence its local moniker of bee hummingbird. It is not much bigger than a bee, and can be seen darting around flowering plants.

Zenaida dove. This is a large dove, sometimes reaching 12 inches in length. It has pinkish brown coloration with a white streak on its tail feathers and frequently travels in pairs, feeding on the ground. In flight, the Zenaida dove emits a unique whistle, caused by air rushing around its wings. It is often called a pea dove.

Marine Life

For many travelers, Jamaica is a destination sought for its underwater attractions. It offers excellent scuba diving, snorkeling and deep-sea fishing, along with a variety of marine life. Among the reefs live brilliant parrotfish, large-eyed squirrelfish, blue tangs, stingrays, eagle rays, rock lobsters and turtles. Blue marlin, yellowfin tuna, shark and wahoo reside in the deepest waters.

Bermuda chubb. A very social schooling fish. Mobay Undersea Tours (see page 100) often takes people to places where the chubb can be seen, such as Chubb Reef.

Caribbean spiny lobster. These shy marine creatures have no claws like their northern relatives.

Common seahorse. These can be seen by divers beneath piers, hiding in soft corals.

Conch. You're probably familiar with this mollusk because of its shell: a beautiful pink curl nearly a foot long that, when blown by those in the know, can produce a whistle. The shell covers a huge piece of white meat with a rubbery texture, as well as a "foot," the appendage used by the conch to drag itself along the ocean floor in search of food.

INTERESTING FACT: *For years, the conch was believed to be an aphrodisiac, filling men with passion and vigor in bed. Many Jamaican men still believe this to be true.*

Eagle rays. Most often spotted along undersea walls, eagle rays are wary of people. Like stingrays, they are white-bellied with patterned topsides, with spots and circles in a white or beige color against a dark gray or brown background. These rays have angular pectoral fins and can reach up to eight feet across.

Four-eyed butterfly fish. This one is easy to spot: just look for a small yellow, gray, white and black fish with what appear to be four eyes! (Two are actually fakes, located near the tail, meant to throw off a predator.)

French angelfish. This gray fish, left, has light, moon-shaped markings. If you swim up slowly, you can get quite close to these lovely inhabitants.

Green moray eel. Eels are often seen under rock crevices during the day and are frightening to look at, constantly opening and closing their mouths. Don't be afraid, though; the eel is just breathing and is generally harmless unless harassed.

Green sea turtle. These turtles have been observed to remain underwater for several days without surfacing for air. They are a protected species. Birds, animals, humans and other marine life are all considered to be a threat to these little guys. Only one turtle out of 10,000 eggs laid reaches maturity.

Hawksbill turtle. These active turtles, another endangered species, are often seen in the waters surrounding Jamaica.

Spiny puffer fish. The light beige puffer fish (also known as a balloon fish, and one look tells you why) resembles a little puffed-up ball scooting through the water by using its micro-fins. It inflates itself with water as a self-defense mechanism.

Southern Atlantic stingray *(Dasyatis americana).* This is the most common type of stingray. It is found in shallow bays near the sandy bottoms where it feeds on mollusks and crustaceans. Stingrays are considered a choice meal by sharks. They have a barbed tail for protection and, much like a scorpion's tail, the barb is brought up to defend the ray from attack from above. The Southern Atlantic ray is either dark gray or brown with a white belly and can reach up to six feet in width.

Insect Life

Jamaica has 21 species of endemic **butterflies**. The best known is the giant swallowtail, the largest swallowtail (and one of the largest butterflies in the Western Hemisphere). This butterfly's wingspan averages six inches. It is primarily found in the John Crow Mountains.

Another interesting insect is the **termite**, which builds giant nests along tree trunks. Look for muddy structures several feet long.

Bites, Stings & Other Things You Want to Avoid

Remember when your mom told you, "Look but don't touch?" Those words of wisdom come in handy here. Although most plants and animals are harmless, you'll find a few creepy crawlies both in and out of the water as well as some plants that are best avoided:

- **Cockspur** (*Caesalpinia bonduc*): This shrub won't inflict any permanent damage, it will rip at you with its hooked thorns as you walk past.
- **Cowitch** (*Mucuna pruriens and Helicteres jamaicensis*): Think of fiberglass on a vine. Think how much you'd itch if you brushed into this plant, covered with fine fibers, as you walked along in shorts. Think of avoiding this one.
- **Fire coral:** There are many varieties, all of which are edged in white. If you accidentally brush against the coral, it will defend itself and burn you.
- **Jellyfish:** These wobbly creatures can inflict painful stings. The best treatment? Rubbing ammonia on the affected area. If you don't have any ammonia with you on the beach, do as a watersports guy once recommended to us on a Montego Bay beach: urinate on the sting.
- **Maiden plum** (*Comocladia dentata*): Be prepared for a nasty rash from this weed if you come in contact with its sap. The weed is dark green with ovate-shaped leaves.
- **Manchineel** (*Hippomane mancinella*): These trees, members of the spurge plant family, have highly acidic leaves and fruit. During a rain, water dropping off the leaves can cause painful burns on your skin and the tree's tiny apples will also burn when stepped on. In most resorts, manchineel trees

have been removed or are clearly marked, often with signs and with trunks painted red.

- **No-See-Ums**. Tucked into that oh-so-wonderful sand lie tiny sand fleas, waiting to bite when the sand cools. You won't feel their bites, but just wait a day or two: welts like jumbo mosquito bites will make themselves apparent and they'll itch for days. To avoid the no-see-ums, stay off the sand at sunset. The fleas are most active when the sand cools.
- **Sand spurs** (*Cenchrus genus*): Also called the "wait-a-minute," this pesky thorn will penetrate unsuspecting bare feet that stumble across it in the sand. Follow mom's advice once again and wear your shoes.
- **Scorpionfish:** This mottled pinkish fish hangs out on coral and is so ugly it actually looks dangerous – and it is. Stay away from this one.
- **Sea urchins:** Avoid stepping on their brittle spines, which break off and lodge in your feet.
- **Snakes:** Jamaica does not have any poisonous snake species. You might come across a harmless grass snake (*Alsophis cantherigerus*), which feeds on frogs and lizards.
- **Stingrays:** Dangerous if stepped on. Make them aware of your presence by dragging your feet when wading.

■ Environmental Organizations

Jamaica has several watchdog organizations that keep an eye on the beautiful environment with which the island has been blessed. The governmental body in charge is the **Natural Resources Conservation Authority**, or NRCA, (☎ 876-923-5125 or toll-free around the island ☎ 888-991-5005). They work on environmental legislation and also monitor for environmental offenses.

Jamaica's bird and animal species are protected under the Wilderness Protection Act of 1974. In 1991, the Protected Areas Resource Conservation (PARC) and the National Resources Conservation Authority (☎ 876-754-7540) were formed. PARC added national parks, starting with the Montego Bay Marine Park as well as the Blue Mountains-John Crow National Park.

The **Jamaica Conservation & Development Trust** (☎ 876-960-2848/9, 920-1084, 920-9989) and the **National Environmental Societies Trust** (☎ 876-960-3316 or 968-5799) work with environmental organizations island-wide.

Across the island, many separate organizations work with their communities to improve and conserve the environmental resources.

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS	
Birdlife Jamaica	☎ 876-927-1864
Bluefields People's Community Association	☎ 876-955-8793
Jamaica Environment Trust	☎ 876-960-3693
Montego Bay Marine Park	☎ 876-979-5221
Natural History Society of Jamaica, UWI	☎ 876-927-1202
Negril Coral Reef Protection Society	☎ 876-957-3735/4626
Negril Environmental Protection Trust	☎ 876-957-3736/3115
Portland Environmental Protection Association	☎ 876-993-9632
Southern Trelawny Environmental Agency	☎ 876-610-0818
Trelawny Environmental Protection Association	☎ 876-954-5986

Montego Bay Marine Park Trust

Have a look at the waters of Montego Bay and you're seeing the work of one of the country's most important ecological groups: Montego Bay Marine Park Trust. This project began about two decades ago when the fish catch took a nose dive and divers began noticing a drop in the quality of the reefs. In 1986 local divers worked with the Ministry of Tourism to implement a marine park; three years later a pilot project was established for a national marine parks system. In 1991 the Montego Bay Marine Park was established.

Today the park has a staff of 10 young Jamaican professionals, including five rangers. The staff is assisted by the Volunteer Association and Friends of the Park. Work includes monitoring the coral reefs and fish as well as water quality. An on-staff marine biologist also works with visiting scientists. The group is working on fundraising efforts to finance the construction of a new headquarters that will house both a seaquarium and an interpretive center.

Another important part of the marine park's task is to work with local schools to increase awareness of the importance of the environment. Students have help with beach cleanups, tree plantings and they also hold an annual Earth Day Fair.

The volunteer association members work with the community to produce special events that include camping trips, hikes, turtle watches, fund-raisers, mangrove plantings and more. Contributions are always appreciated. Montego Bay Marine Park Trust, Pier One Howard Cooke

Boulevard, Montego Bay, Jamaica, ☎ 876-952-5619; fax 876-940-0649; mbmp@n5.com.jm.

■ Government

The island is divided into three counties: **Cornwall, Middlesex** and **Surrey**. These counties (whose designations are used infrequently) are then divided into 14 parishes (whose designations you will often hear). The parishes of Jamaica are **Kingston, St. Andrew, St. Thomas, Portland, St. Mary, St. Ann, Trelawny, St. James, Hanover, Westmoreland, St. Elizabeth, Manchester, Clarendon** and **St. Catherine**. Each of these parishes has a capital city to handle local governmental matters.

Since 1962, Jamaica is an independent nation in the British Commonwealth. Jamaica's government is a parliamentary democracy based on that of Great Britain, with a Governor-General appointed by the Crown. An appointed Privy Council advises the Governor-General on matters pertaining to the Crown, while much of the real power of the government resides in the office of the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister is appointed by the Governor-General, as are the various Ministers of the Cabinet who are recommended for appointment by the Prime Minister.

The Jamaican legislature is composed of two houses, the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House is composed of 60 members elected to five-year terms, while the Senate consists of 21 members appointed by the Governor-General on advice of the Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition.

Jamaica's high court is the Supreme Court, with justices appointed by the Governor-General upon recommendation of the Prime Minister. Its legal system is based on English Common Law.

At present there are three main political parties: The People's National Party (PNP), the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the National Democratic Movement (NDM). Voting age is 18 years.

National Symbols

National Flag: With a diagonal gold cross, the background of the flag is black (the left and right triangles) and green (the top and bottom triangles). Each color is symbolic: the black stands for hardship, the green for both hope and the fertile land, and the gold for wealth and sunshine. The flag's symbolism is "Hardships there are, but the Land is green and the Sun shineth."

Coat of Arms: The island's coat of arms is an Arawak couple beside a shield displaying pineapples and the crest of a Jamaican crocodile.

Motto: The motto of Jamaica is "Out of Many, One People," a reference to the many cultures that came together to produce the nation.

National Tree: The blue mahoe is used to make small pieces of furniture.

National Fruit: The ackee *(Blighia sapinda)*, an import, has reached such prominence as to yield what is, essentially, a national dish: saltfish and ackee. First brought from Ghana, it is a reminder that Captain Bligh (of *Mutiny on the Bounty* fame) brought many tropical fruits to England for the first time. This small, innocent-looking red fruit grows on a large evergreen tree; the fruit is poisonous until it ripens.

National Bird: Streamer-tailed hummingbird.

National Flower: The lignum vitae. The flowers are produced by a tree that contains some of the world's hardest wood, used in early times to build ships. Today the blonde wood, the "wood of life," is used to make beautiful carvings.

■ People & Culture

People

It is estimated that nearly 750,000 enslaved persons were brought to Jamaica between 1655 and 1807 (about 200,000 were then sent to the Spanish isles). The slaves came primarily from the west coast of Africa, mostly from the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and Biafra (now primarily Nigeria).

In addition, many immigrants arrived from elsewhere around the globe. After the abolition of slavery in 1834, workers were brought in from other countries as Jamaica looked for sources of income besides sugar. Workers from Germany, Ireland and Scotland came for a while (and one community, Seaford Town, is filled with descendants of these German settlers). Asian immigrants came from India and China and eventually workers came from what is now Lebanon (although throughout Jamaica they are referred to as "Syrians.")

Today, 92% of Jamaica's residents are of Black African descent. East Indians and African-East Indians make up about 3.4% of the population, while Caucasians represent about 3.2%. Chinese and African-Chinese residents compose a little over 1% of the population.

Language

The official language of Jamaica is English, spoken in proper fashion with a uniquely Jamaican accent. But the language of the streets is **pa-**

tois. This musical dialect is a combination of English, Spanish, Portuguese, African phrases and a good dose of Jamaican slang. Spoken in a sing-song style, the result is as exotic as any foreign language. Jamaican patois is a fascinating use of the language. With patois, "You get more mileage out of your tongue," one Jamaican explained to us.

Jamaica's patois includes words from many different African languages. Most are believed to come from the Twi language and other Gold Coast (not Ghana) languages. Other influences include the language of Mendi, Igbo, Efik, Yoruba, Kongo, Kimbundu, Ewe, Mandinka and, possibly Swahili.

> **INTERESTING FACT:** Patois uses many repeated words, such as **bo-bo** (silly person) and **was-was** (wasp). Scholars believe this pattern came from West African speech.

■ Patois Phrases & Words

Here's an example of some patois you might hear on the streets:

a go foreign . . . . . to leave Jamaica
baby father . . . . . father of one's child
baby mother . . . . . mother of one's child
bakra . . . . . a white slavemaster
bankra . . . . . a large basket
batty . . . . . bottom
bendung maaket . . . . . a sidewalk market, a place where you would bend down or "bendung" to shop
boonoonunus . . . . . wonderful, beautiful
bratta . . . . . something extra
bredda . . . . . brother
chaka-chaka . . . . . messy
chalice . . . . . pipe used for smoking ganja
chimmy . . . . . chamber pot
cool runnings . . . . . a greeting that means things are going well
cotta . . . . . cloth roll to cushion the head when carrying loads
craven . . . . . greedy
cuss-cuss . . . . . argument with cursing
dege-dege . . . . . skinny
duppy . . . . . ghost
dutchy . . . . . dutch cooking pot
ganja . . . . . marijuana
herb . . . . . marijuana
irie (eye-ree) . . . . . all's well, good

jackass rope . . . . . homegrown tobacco
janga . . . . . crayfish
kiss teet . . . . . sucking teeth in disapproval
ku . . . . . look
kyaan. . . . . can't
laba-laba . . . . . gossip
labrish . . . . . gossip
lilly bit . . . . . tiny, small
mash up . . . . . destroy, wreck
natty dread . . . . . dreadlocks or person with dreadlocks
nyam . . . . . eat
oht fi. . . . . about to
pikny . . . . . child
rass . . . . . backside (a common curse)
ratchet . . . . . switchblade
sindung . . . . . sit down
sipple . . . . . slippery
skin your teeth. . . . . smile
teif. . . . . thief
wa mek? . . . . . why?
wagga-wagga . . . . . bountiful
winjy . . . . . sickly
yard . . . . . home

Religion

As you wind through communities in the Jamaican countryside, you'll notice the many churches. (A tour guide recently told us that Jamaica has more churches per capita than any other destination.)

Religion is an important part of Jamaican life. The **Church of Jamaica**, formerly the Church of England, has the largest following. Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists, Christian Scientists and other groups also have significant memberships.

Increasingly, religion is becoming an important part of the visitor's stay as well as the country markets more and more to religious tourism groups. Of special interest to religious conference groups is the ongoing Pulpit Exchange Program operated by Air Jamaica. "This was done to foster good relations with the churches," says Phyllis Wilson, manager, Community Development Department of Air Jamaica, based in New York. "We know there is interest with the churches in North America and the churches of the Caribbean. Air Jamaica will assist with airfares, in particular the pastor, and also give a discount air to members of the

church who accompany the pastor to meetings or other functions." Wilson notes an increase in the number of religious groups going to the island, many during off-season months. "We try to encourage them during the off-peak season, especially May, September and October so we can offer them better prices." Many religious groups work in the smaller communities of the island.

Jamaica is also working to draw religious travelers with several special events throughout the year. Ocho Rios has been in the religious market spotlight as the host of the Jamaica GospelFest, held during the spring. The US-based promotion features a well-known lineup of both American and Jamaican gospel artists. Ocho Rios' Island Village entertainment center also hosts "Island in the Son," a unique gospel fest designed as an alternative for spring break visitors.

CUSTOMS & SHIPPING FOR MEETINGS IN JAMAICA

Whether you are bringing a religious group or other type of group to Jamaica, you'll need to work to get your materials through customs – without spending a fortune. To ensure that your materials and equipment arrive in Jamaica, the Jamaica Tourist Board can help you obtain a waiver of customs duty and bond. You'll need to:

- provide the name of the group, purpose of the visit, dates, number of persons, ground operator, and group leader;
- supply complete shipping information including airway bill and date of arrival in Jamaica;
- write a complete description of items to be shipped including approximate value and serial numbers.

Applications for waiver of duties and bonds are not automatic but are granted by the Minister of Finance. Your application must be received no fewer than 20 working days before shipment. Also, almost all shipments will need the services of a customs broker. For more information on application, contact the Jamaica Tourist Board.

■ Rastafarianism

Jamaica's best known religion is Rastafarianism, which centers around the divinity of the late Haile Selassie, left, emperor of Ethiopia.

You'll see many dreadlocked Rastafarians, usually wearing crocheted tams (a type of hat). Rastafarianism mandates vegetarianism, a strict code of peace and, the best known

facet of the religion, the smoking of *ganja* or marijuana. The reason for these Rasta traditions? The Bible. Rastafarians take their cue from several Bible verses:

- **Proverbs 15.17** "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."
- **Leviticus 21.5** "They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard nor make any cuttings in their flesh."
- **Psalm 104.14** "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man."

Today the Rastas are a small sector of the Jamaican population But because of such Rastas as the late Bob Marley, right, they are symbolic of Jamaica. Rasta men are easily identified by their dreadlocks, or locks, matted waist-length strands that either flow down their back or are held beneath a knitted cap or tam. Rastafarian women generally wear locks as well, along with African clothing and headwraps.

The Rastas, once discriminated against in Jamaican society, typically band together in communities often located outside the town itself. They are strong believers in the importance of natural surroundings and often live in the hills.

Rastas are renowned herbalists, using folk medicine and relying on the land's bounty of plants to heal many ills. Rastas have the distinction of often speaking in the first person. "We" is substituted with "I and I." Other useful Rasta words are irie (all's well), ital (natural, used to describe the diet) and ivine (devine).

Famous Jamaicans

Jamaica has been home to many famous residents, people who excelled in the world of politics, sports, music and other areas.

> **INTERESTING FACT:** Seven residents have been designated as national heroes: Paul Bogle, George William Gordon, Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Norman Washington Manley, Sir Alexander Bustamante, Samuel Sharp and Nanny of the Maroons.

For more information on the national heroes of Jamaica, contact the Jamaica Information Service, 58A Half Way Tree Road, research@jis.gov.jm or ☎ 876-926-3741. Small booklets on each hero are offered for sale.

Belafonte, Harry. The well-known calypso singer and actor born in Jamaica. Famous for song *Jamaica Farewell.*

Bennett, Louise. Poet well known for her patois poems and folktales.

Bogle, Paul. Led the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865. Over 400 rebels were shot or hanged (including Bogle).

Bustamonte, Alexander. Became first Prime Minister of independent Jamaica in 1962.

Cudjoe. Led slave rebellion in 1690 to start the First Maroon War.

Garvey, Marcus. Founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Advocated black pride, which later became part of the US Civil Rights movement. Garvey's "back to Africa" message was later picked up by the Rastas, who embraced Ethiopia as their chosen homeland.

Marcus Garvey

Gordon, George William. Early advocate for the common people of Jamaica. Gordon was a member of Parliament and an outspoken critic of government tyranny. Convicted of conspiracy in the Morant Bay Rebellion, Gordon was executed in 1865.

Manley, Edna, wife of Norman Manley and mother of Michael Manley. Jamaica's best-known sculptor.

Manley, Michael, son of Norman Manley and Edna Manley. Prime Minister known for his socialist politics of the 1970s. He later returned to Prime Minister position in 1989 as a moderate. He was president of the People's National Pary from 1969 to 1992.

Manley, Norman. Former Prime Minister and one of the founders of the modern Jamaica, Norman Washington Manley founded the People's National Party (PNP) and served as its president from its inception in 1938 until his retirement from politics in 1969. During his 30-odd years of public service, he led the fight for universal suffrage and helped draft the Jamaican constitution. Husband of sculptor Edna Manley and father of Michael Manley, who also held the post of Prime Minister.

Marley, Bob. Jamaica's most famous native son, Bob Marley popularized Reggae music (as well as Jamaica and Jamaican Rastafarianism) to the world.

Morgan, Henry. Welsh pirate who was tried but acquitted for piracy only to be knighted and become governor of Jamaica.

Nanny. Led Maroons of the Blue Mountains (Windward Maroons).

Patterson, P.J. Prime Minister 1992-present.

Seaga, Edward. Prime Minister of Jamaica from 1980 to 1989. A Harvard-educated banker, Seaga is best known for his promotion of foreign investments and tourism.

Sam Sharpe

Sharpe, Sam. Baptist preacher hanged in Montego Bay for leading a slave rebellion in 1831. Sam Sharpe Square is named for this national hero.

Tacky. Tacky was a Coromantee slave from West Africa's Gold Coast who organized one of the largest slave rebellions in Jamaican history. The revolt began on Easter, 1760 in the town of Port Maria. Eventually, almost every Coromantee (or Akan) slave on the island joined the rebels. Although Tacky himself was killed soon after the beginning of the rebellion, his band of rebels continued a guerrilla campaign across Jamaica for several months.

■ Holidays & Festivals

Public Holidays

During public holidays, expect all government offices and most retail establishments to close.

January 1	New Year's Day
February-March	Ash Wednesday
March or April	Good Friday and Easter Monday
May 23	Labour Day
August (1st Mon.)	Independence Day
October (3rd Mon.)	National Heroes Day
December 25	Christmas Day
December 26	Boxing Day

Festivals

The Jamaica Tourist Board offers information, including dates, for all of the events listed here. Call them at ☎ 800-JAMAICA or see www.visitjamaica.com.

■ January

Accompong Maroon Festival, *St. Elizabeth*
This event, held on January 6, celebrates the Maroon culture. Festivities date back to the 19th century and commemorate the Maroon uprising against the English. There are feasts, blowing of the Abeng (a wind instrument), and playing of the Maroon drums. This unique festival is little attended by travelers, but is a good event if you're looking to get off the beaten path. ☎ 876-952-4546.

Give Thanks Gospel Festival, *Negril*
This annual event features gospel singers. ☎ 876-957-4405.

Annual National Exhibition, *National Gallery, Kingston*
This event takes place from mid-December through February and features the work of both established and new Jamaican artists. For more information, contact the Jamaica Tourist Board or the National Gallery (☎ 876-922-1563).

High Mountain 10k Road Race, *Williamsfield, Manchester*
Both amateur and professional athletes from across Jamaica take part in this race. ☎ 876-963-4211.

Air Jamaica Jazz/Blues Festival, James Bond Beach, Oracabessa
This event brings in both local and international talent. A must for music buffs! ☎ 888-LOVEBIRD.

Busta Cup Cricket Competition, *Sabina Park, Kingston*
This multi-day event is a regional competition among Caribbean countries. For more information, call the Jamaica Cricket Association, ☎ 876-967-0322.

Harmony Hall, *Ocho Rios*
This series takes place from January through March and features the works of Harmony Hall founder, Annabella Proudlock, as well as many other Jamaica artists. For more information, contact the Jamaica Tourist Board or call Harmony Hall at ☎ 876-975-4222.

LTM National Pantomime, *Little Theater, Kingston*
Jamaica's rich pantomime theater is something not to be missed. It is scheduled Wednesday to Sunday, December through March. ☎ 876-926-6129.

Polo and Equestrian Club of Oakbrook, *Shady Tree, St. Ann*
The polo and equestrian event is considered one of the best in the Caribbean. ☎ 876-922-8581.

■ February

Harmony Hall, *Ocho Rios*
See listing above (January).

Busta Cup Cricket Competition, *Sabina Park, Kingston*
See listing above (January)

Blue Mahoe Craft Fair and Beach Party, *East Prospect, Kingston*
This annual event features Kumina groups as well as craft demonstrations. ☎ 876-960-2231.

Bob Marley Week/Reggae Sunsplash, *Kingston and Ocho Rios*
The memory of reggae great Bob Marley is celebrated with a week of activities, including art exhibits, seminars at the Bob Marley Museum and, finally, concerts at Reggae Sunsplash in Ocho Rios' White River Reggae Park. This is a must for true Marley lovers. Early February.

Bob Marley Birthday Celebration, *Nine Miles (outside Ocho Rios)*
A concert and celebration of the life of Bob Marley. Held on February 6. ☎ 876-978-2991.

Jamaica International Marathon, *Kingston*
This marathon takes places from the National Stadium around Kingston Harbour to Port Royal. ☎ 876-927-5331.

Annual National Exhibition, *National Gallery, Kingston*
See listing above (January).

LTM National Pantomime, Little Theater, *Kingston*
See listing above (January).

Pineapple Cup Yacht Race, *Montego Bay Yacht Club*
This multi-day event is hosted by the Storm Trysail Club and the Montego Bay Yacht Club. It is considered one of the top distance sailing races in the world. Along with the race, there are also watersports activities. ☎ 876-979-8038.

Negril Fat Tire and Music Festival, *Good Hope, Negril Hills*
This week-long festival celebrates both downhill and cross-country mountain bike racing. Events include a night ride into a cave for a "cave rave," a Jamaica street party, scavenger hunt by bicycle and more. Riders may compete in expert or a combined sport/beginner class. All riders are welcome to participate. Helmet laws apply; 26-inch ("big wheels") are mandatory. There is a JA$250 race entry fee; spectators are welcome and free. The downhill race is a two-man eliminator (head-to-head racing, with one man out from each run). The cross-country race covers a scenic, four-mile, 99% single-track loop that includes one major climb. Expert-class race includes seven laps. Both the downhill and the cross-country race take place in the hills just above the Negril Bay, close to the downtown area.

This race is sanctioned by the Jamaica Cycling Federation, produced by the Jamaica Mountain Bike Association and approved by the Jamaica Tourist Board. The top Jamaican racer is declared National Champion. The best Jamaican riders may become part of the Jamaican Mountain Bike Team and may be eligible to participate in international UCI and World Cup races in preparation for the Commonwealth, Pan American and Olympic games.

Contact **Rusty's X-cellent Adventures**, ☎ 876-957-0155, rxadventures@cwjamaica.com.

■ March

For details about **Harmony Hall** in Ocho Rios, the **Busta Cup Cricket Competition** and the LTM National Pantomime (both in Kingston) see above (January).

Negril Music Festival, *Negril*
This three-night festival showcases the talents of local reggae and calypso singers as well as international performers. Mid-March.

Spring Break, *Negril and Montego Bay*
These popular spring break spots celebrate with scheduled reggae concerts, beach volleyball contests and more. Entry to concerts is free for students with a student ID; certain hotels also offer discounts. www.visitjamaica.com.

■ April

Bowden Invitational Marlin Tournament, *Bowden, St. Thomas*
This is considered one of the top fishing events on the island; open by invitation only. For information, call the Sir Henry Morgan Angling Association, ☎ 876-923-8724.

Devon House Easter Craft Fair, *Kingston*
Shop for locally produced arts and crafts and enjoy traditional food and drink. Like the Christmas Crafts Festival, this event is held at historic Devon House.

Carnival, *Ocho Rios, Kingston and Montego Bay*
This week-long event in April includes street parades, fêtes and a general feeling of celebration. Visitors can join in the fun. Horse lovers can enjoy the Red Stripe Horse Show and Gymkhana at Chukka Cove in Ocho Rios, an annual event that brings in top riders from Jamaica, Europe and the US. ☎ 876-923-9138/9 or 876-922-1000.

Cyanide's Carnival Fantasy Fest, *Margueritaville, Negril*
This party is billed as a hedonistic romp on the beach with body painting and mask parades. ☎ 876-978-2903.

Harmony Hall Easter Craft Fair, *Ocho Rios*
This annual event features one-of-a-kind Easter crafts as well as art. ☎ 876-975-4222.

Jamaica Polo Association Tournament, *Kingston*
This event is the largest polo tournament on the island and features local polo teams. ☎ 876-922-8581.

Montego Bay Yacht Club Easter Regatta, *Montego Bay*
This annual regatta is open to members of other yacht clubs. For information, call the Montego Bay Yacht Club, ☎ 876-979-8038 or 979-8262.

Drax Hall Kite Festival, *Drax Hall, Ocho Rios*
This Easter Monday event showcases all types of kites produced locally and internationally. ☎ 876-972-9607.

Trelawny Yam Festival, *Trelawny*
This annual event is pure fun. There's a street parade,

best-dressed donkey competition, goat competition, culinary contest, yam farmers' competition and more. ☎ 876-610-0818.

Treasure Beach Off Road Triathlon, *Treasure Beach*
This yearly event includes a 400-meter swim, an 18K mountain bike race and a 4K run. For information, contact Jake's at ☎ 876-965-0552 or Jakes@cwjamaica.com.

■ May

Portland Annual Flower Show, *Crystal Spings, Portland*
This flower show features orchids and many other species. For more information, call the Port Antonio office of the Jamaica Tourist Board, ☎ 876-993-3051.

Manchester Horticultural Society Show, *Mandeville*
This horticultural society has met for 130 years and celebrates spring with this well-respected flower show. For more information, contact Mrs. Stephenson, ☎ 876-962-2909.

■ June

Ocho Rios Jazz Festival, *Ocho Rios*
Summer brings plenty of music to the island, starting with this festival, which offers a week of international performers from the US, England, France, Holland, Japan and the Caribbean. Jazz events take place in Ocho Rios as well as Montego Bay, with jazz teas, jazz festivals on the river, jazz barbecues and more. For more information, call the Jazz Hotline, ☎ 876-927-3544.

National Finals of the Performing Arts,
Little Theater, Kingston
Showcases local dance, music and drama in June and July. For more information, contact the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, ☎ 876-984-0757.

National Environmental Awareness Week, *Kingston*
This week-long event, which coincides with World Environment Day and World Oceans Day, was designed to focus public attention on environmental issues. The Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA), in collaboration with government agencies, organizes the program. It includes special public tours of the Montego Bay Marine Park and the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park, a special church service and workshops. ☎ 876-754-7540, 7543-4.

CONSERVATION

For more on the management of natural resources in Jamaica, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Authority, 10 Caledonia Ave, John McIntosh Building, Kingston 5, Jamaica, West Indies ☎ 876-754-7540, fax 876-754-7595/6; nrca@infochan.com or nrcaedu@infochan.com. Web address: www.nrca.org.

Green Expo, *National Arena, Kingston*
This event features environmentally friendly products; hosted by the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission. ☎ 876-906-5641.

■ July

Columbus Regatta, *Puerto Seca Beach, Discovery Bay*
This annual event includes all sorts of watersports activities – fishing tournament, swim races, diving competitions, triathlon, windsurfing, and more. ☎ 876-973-2900.

Jamaica Spice, *Ocho Rios*
This special event is a treat for those with an interest in Jamaican food. For two days, the park adjacent to Renaissance Jamaica Grande fills with arts, crafts, music and literature, all tied together under the theme of food. Traditional Jamaican dishes are served – jerk pork, escovitch fish, ackee and saltfish, fish and bammy, coconut drops. Locally made products, such as coffee candles, edible flowers, sauces and seasonings, are for sale. Cooking demonstrations on the secret of jerk cooking draw crowds; other events include a professional culinary competition, a gala diner and a cookbook signing by Jamaican culinary writers. Traditional dances, musical performances, donkey rides, face painting for kids and art displays round out the weekend of fun. For information, call the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, ☎ 876-984-0757.

Tornadoes Invitational Swimming Meet,
National Stadium Pool, Kingston
This event features swim clubs from Jamaica as well as the US, Canada and other Caribbean islands. For information, ☎ 876-924-6187 or jcwat@cwjamaica.com.

National Song Competition, *Kingston*
This event features original songs written by Jamaicans. Concerts take place around the island and an awards ceremony is held in Kingston. For more details, call the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, ☎ 876-984-0757.

Gran' Market/August Fair, *Kingston*
Held at the Ranny Williams Entertainment Centre, this event features Jamaican arts and crafts as well as foods. For more, call the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, ☎ 876-984-0757.

Negril Carnival, *Negril*
Join in the fun with parades, concerts, mento band competitions and more. Late July and early August. This carnival is on a smaller scale than the blow-out in Kingston, but it's still great fun. ☎ 876-957-3528.

Pre-Independence Craft Fair, *Devon House, Kingston*
Shop for one-of-a-kind craft items at this annual event held in late July. ☎ 876-929-7029.

National Finals of the Performing Arts, *Little Theater, Kingston*
Showcases local dance, music and drama in June and July. For more information, contact the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, ☎ 876-984-0757.

National Dance Theatre Company's Season of Dance, *Little Theater, Kingston*
Both modern and traditional dance are showcased in this annual event scheduled from mid-July through August.

Alleluiah, *Church of the Rock, Kingston*
This concert features gospel music by both local and international groups. ☎ 876-925-4914/924-7620.

■ August

Negril Carnival, *Negril*
See listing above.

Jamaica Independence Day Parade, *Kingston*
This parade features uniformed groups and bands. Held on August 6 each year to celebrate the country's independence from Britain, which was granted in 1962. The event begins at Kings House, the residence of the Governor General, and is followed by a parade of costumed participants. Look for Junkanoo dancers. For more information, contact the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, ☎ 876-984-0757.

Reggae Sumfest, *Montego Bay*
One of the largest musical events on the island and the Caribbean. This extravaganza draws local and international talent.

National Dance Theatre Company's Season of Dance, *Little Theater, Kingston*
Both modern and traditional dance are showcased in this annual event scheduled from mid-July through August.

Emancipation Wake, *Seville, St. Ann (near Ocho Rios)*
Coinciding with independence celebrations, this event recalls the full emancipation in Jamaica. Events include song and dance. For more, contact the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, ☎ 876-984-0757.

■ September

Montego Bay Yacht Club Marlin Tournament, *Montego Bay*
Both local and international participants vie for prizes during this long-running five-day tournament. ☎ 876-979-8038.

International Equestrian Show, *Kingston Polo Club, Kingston*
This show draws competitors from several countries. ☎ 876-922-8581.

Panasonic Golf Championship
Sandals Golf & Country Club, Ocho Rios
For information, ☎ 876-926-3370.

Falmouth Fishing Tournament, *Glistening Waters, Falmouth*
This three-day event is very popular. ☎ 876-954-3338.

■ October

Terra Nova's Heritage Food Festival, *Kingston*
Jamaica's culinary heritage is celebrated here with regional dishes complemented by local music. The festival spans a full week; all events take place at the elegant Nova Hotel. ☎ 876-926-2211 or 926-9334.

Mento Yard, *Seville Great House, St. Ann (near Ocho Rios)*
A great place to learn more about the cultural heritage of Jamaica, this annual event includes song, dance, crafts and more. The site itself is of interest, too. The great house was constructed at the site of Maima, a former Arawak/Spanish and African village. For details, contact the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, ☎ 876-984-0757.

All That Heritage & Jazz Festival, *Montego Bay*
This annual heritage festival includes both local and international jazz musicians. ☎ 876-929-2498.

Port Antonio Blue Marlin Tournament,
Port Antonio Marina, Port Antonio
This is one of the oldest fishing tournaments in the Caribbean, attracting dedicated anglers from around the globe. For information on the multi-day event, ☎ 876-923-8724.

Treasure Beach Hook 'n Line Fishing Tournament,
Treasure Beach
This South Coast fishing tournament also features environmental exhibits. Call Jake's, ☎ 876-965-0635.

Peter Tosh's Birthday Celebration, *Belmont, Westmoreland*
The well-known Jamaican singer is memorialized with concerts, slide shows and celebrations. ☎ 876-957-4605.

Oktoberfest, *Kingston*
Sponsored by the Jamaican German Society, this late-October event offers German food and beer. Octoberfest celebrations have been going on for over a quarter-century. ☎ 876-960-0617.

■ November

Harmony Hall's Anniversary Show, *Ocho Rios*
The elegant Harmony Hall exhibits the works of local artists during this annual show from mid-November through early December.

Caribbean Heritage Festival, *St. Catherine*
Want to learn more about the music and food of the Caribbean? Here is your chance. This three-day festival showcases the heritage of the many different cultures found in the Caribbean. ☎ 876-988-0288.

Jamerican Film and Music Festival, *Montego Bay*
Of special interest to film lovers, this festival celebrates the work of Caribbean film makers with movie screenings, seminars, parties and plenty of music. ☎ 323-936-8951.

Caribbean Music Expo, *Ocho Rios*
This event is actually a trade show featuring musicians from throughout the Caribbean. The event also has numerous concerts. ☎ 876-929-4089.

Children's International Horse Exhibition,
Rocky Point, Montego Bay
This event features children's teams from Jamaica and other Caribbean islands. ☎ 876-922-8581.

St. Andrew Flower Arrangement and Garden Club,
University of the West Indies, Kingston
This annual event, now running for over three decades, showcases floral arrangements from Jamaica and other Caribbean countries, as well as South America and the US. ☎ 876-927-6717.

■ December

For details about the **Annual National Exhibition and the LTM National Pantomime**, both held in Kingston, see listings above (January).

Devon House Christmas Fair, *Kingston*
Shop for Jamaican art, crafts and local foods at this three-day

shopping extravaganza held at the historic Devon House. ☎ 876-929-7029.

Harmony Hall Pre-Christmas Crafts Fair, *Ocho Rios*
Shop for unique crafts items and artwork at this annual event. ☎ 876-975-4222.

Jamin' International Regatta, *Montego Bay*
This three-day event in early December features canoe and swim races. Contact the Montego Bay Yacht Club, ☎ 876-979-8038.

■ Island Art

Whatever your budget, you'll find affordable artwork here, from woodcarvings to fine art. The National Gallery in Kingston displays works by the most famous Jamaican artists – John Dunkley, Kapo, David Miller Sr., David Miller Jr., and Edna Manley, wife of Norman Manley and one of Jamaica's finest sculptors.

Jamaica's art, from its roadside crafts to its fine gallery pieces, speaks volumes about Jamaican life. We recently interviewed Nicky deLisser of the Gallery of West Indian Art, an excellent stop for those who want to learn more about the rich artwork available on this island.

■ ADVENTURE TALKS
Interview with the Gallery of West Indian Art

Albert Artwell

Q. Why does Jamaica have such a rich array of art as well as crafts?

A. We have found that the best Caribbean art and craft comes from Haiti and Jamaica. The fact that both of these countries are among the poorest in the Caribbean might be coincidental, yet we suspect that poverty often produces good art. It may have to do with the fact that the people, in order to make a living, are forced to become "jacks of all trades." Many a Jamaican is familiar with and actively engaged in carpentry, housepainting, plumbing, metalwork, mechanical repairs, electrical repairs, etc. It may be that this familiarity with so many varied skills, acquired early in life and primarily for the purposes of making a living, translates into a unique ability to use these combined skills artistically with the greatest ease. Furthermore, the recycling and creative use of materials remains an economic

necessity in Jamaican everyday life. This is mirrored, to a degree, by our creative use of materials in art and crafts.

David Wilson

Q. What styles are considered uniquely Jamaican?

A. There are striking similarities between our Caribbean art and the art of Africa in terms of color combinations, patterns and themes. I suspect that there is, for lack of a better word, some sort of "ancestral memory" at work – traditions and cultural memories that have been handed down through generations and which, in combination with the many other cultural influences and traditions found in Jamaica, have produced a uniquely Caribbean style. Then again, I could be wrong.... The fact that most Jamaican artists and craftsmen are self-taught often results in very idiosyncratic styles. Our painters, for example, often combine colors in a most unusual and non-classical way. The perspectives, representations and patterns used in paintings also reflect this fortunate lack of formal training and help to make our art easily distinguishable.

Milton Messam

Q. Many travelers who have visited Jamaica previously might be familiar with the beautiful crafts sold on the island, but might not be aware of the fine art available. Can you tell us more about some of the artists whose work would be good examples of fine art?

A. While there are many distinguished Jamaican artists in the fields of sculpture and pottery, we are most familiar with the painters. Jamaica has produced a well-known school of naif/primitive painters – the "Jamaican Intuitives." To this school belong Albert Artwell, Dolores Anglin, Everald Brown, Ras Dizzy and others. You can find some of their biographical information on our website (www.galleryofwestindianart.com).

Q. Can you tell us more about your gallery and its offerings?

A. The Gallery of West Indian Art was founded by Liz deLisser some 35 years ago. She now runs it with the help of her daughter Nicky. The gallery has two outlets; one in Montego Bay (11, Fairfield Road, Catherine Hall, Montego Bay, ☎ 876-952-4547, fax 979-5156) and one at the prestigious Round Hill Hotel, St. James (☎ 876-956-7050). The gallery also wholesales throughout the Caribbean, as well as in the US and Europe.

The gallery specializes in Haitian, Jamaican and Cuban art and paintings, mostly from the intuitive/naif schools. Most of the well-known Haitian and Jamaican artists are represented in our collection. We also produce and sell a wide range of hand-carved, hand-painted art and craft items, as well as full-sized and baby furniture.

■ Island Cuisine

Jamaica residents have come from around the globe, bringing with them the cooking techniques, flavors, spices and recipes of their homelands and blending them with the bountiful harvest of this tropical island. The result is some of the most flavorful cuisine in the Caribbean.

The first Europeans on the island were Spanish. Many Spanish Jews also arrived here during Spanish rule, contributing dishes such as escovitch fish, a vinegary concoction that's found on many homestyle menus.

In 1655, the Spanish lost Jamaica to England. That century, English influences developed the Jamaican pattie, a turnover filled with spicy meat that's a favorite lunch snack with locals. It's the equivalent of an island hamburger.

A century later, Chinese and East Indian influences made their way to Jamaica, when indentured laborers who replaced slaves after emancipation brought their own culinary talents. Today, curried dishes grace nearly every Jamaican menu, using local meats such as goat, chicken and seafood.

Here's a look at the many dishes that fill Jamaican menus. Some of these are seen in tourist restaurants, while others are primarily home-cooked dishes, sometimes made for special holidays and events.

Menu Items

Ackee and saltfish. The national breakfast dish is ackee and saltfish. Ackee is cooked and looks (and tastes) much like scrambled eggs. You won't find ackee for sale in the United States because it is poisonous until it's ripe.

Bammy. This fried bread is made from cassava flour and is served with fried fish.

Blue drawers. See Duckanoo, below.

Bulla. A spicy bun.

Bun. A favorite Easter dish, bun is a spicy bread eaten with cheese.

Christmas cake. Visit a Jamaican home near the holiday season and, along with a glass of sorrel, you'll be served Jamaican Christmas cake. This delicious confection includes raisins, cinnamon, cherries and, in some cases, prunes.

Coco bread. Ah, a warm, buttered piece of coco bread and a sandy beach... no one could ask for much more than that. This heavenly bread is best right out of the oven.

Corn pone. Cornmeal gives this pudding its name. It's made with coconut, sugar and spices.

Cowcod soup. Another one of those infamous Jamaican aphrodisiacs, cowcod soup is usually sold at roadside stands and includes bananas, pepper and white rum.

Curried goat. You just don't get any more Jamaican than curried goat. Look for it on any traditional island menu. It's especially popular at festivals and parties.

Cut cake. This sweet cake is made with diced coconut and ginger toffee.

Duckanoo. The recipe for duckanoo was brought from Africa. This delicious dessert is made with cornmeal, coconut, spices and brown sugar, all of which are tied up in a banana leaf (hence its other names, Blue Drawers and Tie-A-Leaf) and slowly cooked in boiling water.

Escovitch. Escovitch is a style of cooking using vinegar, onions and spices brought to Jamaica by the Spanish Jews. In Jamaican grocery stores you can also find bottled escovitch sauce to make the preparation easier.

Escovitch fish. A contribution by the Spanish Jews who lived on the island nearly 500 years ago, this fried fish marinated with vinegar is a spicy way to enjoy the local catch.

Festival. This bread is frequently served with jerk and is similar to hush puppies.

Fish tea. This spicy soup looks and tastes much better than it sounds. Like a fish bouillon, this broth captures the taste of the sea. Watch out for fish bones when you eat this popular favorite.

Fritters. These deep-fried breads usually contain codfish or conch and are served as an appetizer.

Gizzada. A coconut tart.

Grater cake. Another confection made from grated coconut and sugar; usually pink and white.

Hard dough, or hard dough bread. Brought to Jamaica by the Chinese, hard dough bread has become a staple in homes today.

Ital food. Nope, it's not Italian food but Ital (eye-tal). This is the food of the Rastafarians, a vegetarian cuisine that does not make use of salt. Look for the red, green and gold Rasta colors on dining establishments as a clue to locating Ital eateries, which are often quite small.

Jerk. The most popular dish in Jamaica is jerk. The main ingredient – pork, chicken or fish – is marinated with a fiery mixture of spices, including Scotch bonnet, a pepper that makes a jalapeño taste like a marshmallow, pimento or allspice, nutmeg and thyme. It's all served up with even more hot sauce, rice and peas, and the wonderful festival bread (see above). Jerk is one of the ultimate Jamaican dishes, dating back to the island's earliest days. The practice of cooking the meat over the flame was started by the Arawak Indians and then later seasoned up by the Maroons.

Johnny cake. Sometimes called journey cakes (since you could carry them along on your journey), these cakes are actually fried or baked breads. They're a favorite accompaniment to saltfish.

Mannish water. This spicy soup is reportedly an aphrodisiac (along with many other Jamaican specialties). Mannish water is sometimes called power water, and is made from goats' heads (some cooks include tripe and feet as well), garlic, scallions, cho-cho, green bananas, Scotch bonnet peppers and spinners. White rum is an optional ingredient. Often, men enjoy mannish water before drinking rum, but this item is a rarity on restaurant menus – it's usually sold at roadside stands, along with roasted yam.

Matrimony. This dessert is available only near Christmas time. It's made from purple star apples, which ripen in the winter.

Patties. The patty is to Jamaicans what the hamburger is to Americans. Ask any Jamaican and he'll tell you his favorite patty stand. This fried pie is filled with either spicy meat or, occasionally, vegetables.

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *One Jamaican told us his favorite was Tastee Patties, sold throughout Jamaica. "They are the standard by which patties are judged," the devotee swore.*

Pepperpot soup. Pepperpot is indeed peppery, although the main ingredient is callaloo, which gives this island favorite its green color. Along with the spinach-like callaloo, the soup includes pig tails or salt pork (sometimes salt beef), coconut milk, okra and plenty of spices.

Pone. A pone is pudding.

Pumpkin soup. Caribbean pumpkins are not large and sweet like their American counterparts, but small and a favorite soup ingredient.

Red pea soup. Another one of Jamaica's famous soups, this one is made from kidney beans, salted pig tails, beef and vegetables.

Rice and peas. This dish is found on just about every lunch and dinner plate and is sometimes nicknamed the Coat of Arms. It features rice and either peas or beans are cooked in coconut milk and spices (in Jamaica the preferred "pea" is the red kidney bean). "A home without rice and peas and chicken on Sunday is like no home at all," said Ralph Irvin, an excellent taxi driver who escorted us around the Montego Bay area one memorable trip. "Everyone looks forward to it."

Rundown. This entrée is pickled fish cooked in a seasoned coconut milk until the fish just falls apart or literally "runs down."

Solomon gundy. This appetizer, eaten on crackers, is a pâté whose main ingredient is pickled fish.

Spinners. These dumplings are found in soups and stews and take their name from their thin, twisted shape.

Stamp and go. You could call them fast food or appetizers, but "stamp and go" seems much more colorful. Stamp out these little fish fritters in the kitchen, grab some for the road, and go.

Stew peas. Made with either red peas or gungo peas, this soup also includes pork and coconut milk.

Tie-a-Leaf. See Duckanoo (above).

Turned cornmeal. Cook cornmeal in seasoned coconut milk, add some meat, fish or vegetables if you like, and you've got this tasty dish.

WHAT'S TO EAT?
What will you eat on your trip to Jamaica? For the unadventurous, there's all the usual fare straight from home: burgers, fries, pizza, etc. For adventure travelers, however, a taste of Jamaica's rich cuisine is as much an experience as a scuba excursion or a mountain bike trek. Venture off the beaten path and explore some local eateries for a real taste of the island.
BREAKFAST
Ackee and saltfish; fried dumpling or fried bammy; boiled banana or boiled yam. Tea (most hot drinks are referred to as "tea"): cerassee tea, cocoa, Milo, Blue Mountain coffee
LUNCH
Patty, coco bread or bun and cheese. Lemonade, coconut water, sky juice, Ting.
DINNER
Rice and peas; curried goat or chicken; jerk pork, fish or chicken; fried plantains or boiled banana. Juice (pawpaw, carrot, etc.).

■ Shopping

Throughout Jamaica's resort areas, you'll find many duty-free shops devoted to selling perfumes, jewelry, watches and leathers. But don't forget Jamaica's home-grown gifts during your shopping tour of the island. Here's alist of things we never forget to pick up when on the island:

- **Liquors.** Jamaica makes several excellent rums. Appleton and Myers are the best known; Sangster's is another top name. Tia Maria liqueur, a coffee flavored delight, is another popular purchase. And there's always Red Stripe beer if you're watching your pennies.
- **Coffee.** Blue Mountain coffee is considered one of the finest in the world. Gift shops at the resorts and the airport sell it in small burlap gift bags for about US $1 per ounce (less than half the price found in American coffee shops).
- **Artwork.** Jamaican crafts are some of the best in the Caribbean. Look for wood carvings; lignum vitae creations are the priciest and the most beautiful.

Travel Information

■ When To Go

Regardless of when you visit, you're almost always assured of short-sleeve weather, balmy trade winds and plenty of sun. Temperatures vary only about 10° between summer and winter. The hottest months are July and August, when temperatures top out at 85 to 90°; the coolest month is February, when highs can reach 86-90° and nighttime can dip as low as the mid-60s.

The busiest tourist months constitute "high season" – the months between December 15 and April 15. During this time, rates are at their highest (and really reach a peak during the week between Christmas and New Year's).

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *Rooms can sometimes be difficult to come by at top resorts during high season, so plan ahead.*

The "shoulder seasons," the months on each side of high season, are very pleasant weather-wise, yet you'll find prices much lower during this period. The least expensive times to visit are during the summer months

and the peak of hurricane season (August through October). Remember, hurricanes are forecast days in advance, so keep abreast of conditions and you should have time to reschedule in the event that a hurricane is visiting at the same time you are.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *Recently, many of the largest resorts have started instituting a "hurricane guarantee," offering guests their money back for days lost to bad weather.*

Water temperatures dip slightly during the winter months, when they average 80°. During the summer, the waters warm to about 84°, a balmy bath-like temperature that makes wet suits strictly optional.

For a current weather report, check out the Jamaica Tourist Board website: www.jamaicatravel.com.

■ Immigration & Customs

Entry Requirements

US and Canadian citizens may enter Jamaica with a passport or other proof of citizenship, such as an original birth certificate with a raised seal, a naturalization certificate or a certificate of citizenship along with a photo ID (all documents must bear the same name). You'll also need to show a return or ongoing ticket. A voter registration card is no longer valid proof of citizenship.

Citizens of the United Kingdom, Japan, Australia, Germany, Ireland and France will need a valid passport and a return or onward ticket.

Customs Regulations

■ US Customs

US visitors can return home after a 48-hour visit with up to $600 of duty-free purchases. If you buy Jamaican art, rum, perfume, coffee or other locally made items, they are also duty-free. Visitors can mail to the US an unlimited number of gifts worth up to $100 without duty (cigars, liquors and perfumes are not included).

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *Before your trip, get a copy of the "Know Before You Go" brochure (Publication 512) from the US Customs Service at your airport or by writing the US Customs Service, PO Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044.*

When you leave the US then return home, you will pass through US Customs at your point of US entry. You'll complete a customs declaration form, one per household, identifying the total amount of your expenditures while out of the country.

Your duty-free allowance includes any items purchased in duty-free shops, gifts presented to you, gifts you bought in Jamaica for other people, and purchases you might be wearing (such as clothing or jewelry).

The US Department of Agriculture allows you to bring back up to one ounce of decorative beach sand.

Some items cannot be brought back to the US. These include:

- Books or cassettes made without authorized copyright ("pirated" copies)
- Any type of drug paraphernalia
- Firearms
- Fruits and vegetables
- Meats and their by-products (such as pâté)
- Plants or plant cuttings
- Tortoiseshell jewelry or other turtle products (these are offered for sale in Jamaica)

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *Keep your sales slips and pack so your purchases can be reached easily.*

■ Canadian Customs

With a seven-day absence from Canada, visitors may claim a $500 exemption yearly, not including alcohol and tobacco. Exemptions cannot be pooled with other travelers in your party.

■ British Customs

UK travelers have the following exemption: 200 cigarettes, 50 cigars or one liter of spirits for visitors age 17 or over and all other goods up to £36 value.

■ Japanese Customs

Japanese travelers have an exemption of up to Yen 200,000 and three bottles of liquor for travelers age 20 and over.

■ Transportation To, From & Around Jamaica

Air Service

Arrival in Montego Bay is at the **Donald Sangster International Airport** via the following airlines:

Air Jamaica, ☎ 800-523-5585, from Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Ft. Lauderdale, Los Angeles, Miami, Newark, New York, Orlando, London, Manchester, Philadelphia and Toronto. www.airjamaica.com.

Air Jamaica Express, ☎ 876-923-8680 or 800-523-5585, from Santo Domingo, Grand Cayman and Belize. www.airjamaica.com.

Air Canada, ☎ 416-925-2311 or 800-776-3000, from Halifax, Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg. www.aircanada.com.

ALM, ☎ 800-327-7230, from Curaçao. www.alm-airlines.com.

American Airlines, ☎ 800-433-7300, from Miami and New York. www.aa.com.

American Trans Air, ☎ 800-225-2995, from Indianapolis-Ft. Lauderdale (winter), Indianapolis-Orlando (summer).

British Airways, ☎ 800-247-9297 or 0181-897-4000, from London. www.britishairways.com.

Condor, ☎ 800-542-6975, from Frankfurt.

Copa, ☎ 800-359-2672 or 305-477-7333, from Panama City, Bogota, Peru and Ecuador.

Cubana, ☎ 876-978-3406, from Cuba (Santiago and Havana).

LTU, ☎ 800-888-0200, from Dusseldorf, Germany.

Northwest Airlines, ☎ 800-225-2525, from Minneapolis and Tampa. www.nwa.com.

Trans World Airlines, ☎ 800-892-4141, from St. Louis.

USAirways, ☎ 800-428-4322, from Philadelphia-Charlotte. www.usairways.com.

FLYING TIMES TO MONTEGO BAY	
Atlanta: 2 hrs 40 mins	Indianapolis: 4 hrs
Baltimore: 3 hrs	London: 10 hrs 15 mins
Boston: 3 hrs 40 mins	Los Angeles: 5 hrs 30 mins
Chicago: 3 hrs 45 mins	Miami: 1 hour 25 mins
Cleveland: 3 hrs 15 mins	Milwaukee: 3 hrs 45 mins
Dallas: 3 hrs 20 mins	New York: 3 hrs 20 mins
Detroit: 3 hrs 15 mins	Orlando: 2 hrs
Ft. Lauderdale: 1 hr 30 mins	St. Louis: 3 hrs 40 mins

In Kingston, the **Norman Manley International Airport** is served by:

Air Jamaica, ☎ 800-523-5585, from Atlanta, Chicago, Ft. Lauderdale, Miami, Newark, New York, Orlando, London, Manchester and Toronto. www.airjamaica.com.

Air Jamaica Express, ☎ 876-923-8680 or 800-523-5585, from Santo Domingo, Grand Cayman and Belize. www.airjamaica.com.

Air Canada, ☎ 416-925-2311 or 800-776-3000, from Toronto. www.aircanada.com.

ALM, ☎ 800-327-7230 or 305-477-0955, from Curaçao. www.alm-airlines.com.

American Airlines, ☎ 800-433-7300, from New York and Miami. www.aa.com.

British Airways, ☎ 800-247-9297 (US) or 0181-897-4000 (London). Service from London. www.britishairways.com.

BWIA, ☎ 800-327-7401, from Antigua, Barbados, Port of Spain, St. Maarten and St. Lucia.

Cayman Airways, ☎ 800-422-9626, from Grand Cayman. www.caymanairways.com.

Copa, ☎ 800-359-2672 or 305-477-7333, from Panama City, Bogota, Peru and Ecuador.

■ Intra-Island Air Service

Air Jamaica Express, ☎ 876-923-8680 or 800-523-5585.

Timair Ltd., ☎ 876-952-2516.

Tropical Airlines, ☎ 876-940-5917.

Cruise Service

Most cruise ships arrive in Ocho Rios or Montego Bay. Both city's terminals are within easy distance of the craft markets and shopping centers.

Carnival Cruise Line, ☎ 800-327-9501, www.carnival.com.

Celebrity-Fantasy, ☎ 800-437-3111, www.celebrity-cruises.com.

Commodore Cruise Line, ☎ 800-237-5361.

Costa Cruise Line, ☎ 800-462-6782, www.costacruises.com.

Crown Cruise Line (Cunard), ☎ 800-528-6273, www.cunardline.com.

Holland America, ☎ 800-SAIL-HAL, www.hollandamerica.com.

Princess Cruises, ☎ 800-PRINCESS, www.princess.com.

Royal Caribbean Cruise Line, ☎ 800-398-9819, www.royalcaribbean.com.

Travel Agents/Tour Operators

Many travel agents specialize in Jamaica and can assist you in planning a getaway that best meets both your interests and your budget. The Jamaica Tourist Board has a helpful Travel Agent Locator service on its website, using your zip code to located the nearest Jamaica expert agent in your region. Check out: www.JamaicaTravel.com/travel/locator.html.

Most package tours include airport transfers. Check with individual operators for rates, package options and gateway cities, which can change seasonally.

■ Air/Land Package Tour Operators

Adventure Vacations, ☎ 800-638-9040, from New York and Baltimore.

Alken Tours Inc., ☎ 800-221-6686, from New York.

Air Jamaica Vacations, ☎ 800-LOVEBIRD, from New York, Newark, Philadelphia and Baltimore.

Apple Vacations, ☎ 800-727-3550, from New York, Newark, Philadelphia and Baltimore.

Around Town Tours, ☎ 800-468-0906, from New York, Newark, Philadelphia and Baltimore.

Atlas Tours, ☎ 800-634-1057, from New York, Newark, Philadelphia and Baltimore.

Dream Vacation Tours, ☎ 877-718-TRIP, from New York and Baltimore.

GoGo Worldwide Vacations, ☎ 888-520-GOGO, from New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Boston and Washington, DC. www.gogowwv.com.

GWV International, ☎ 800-225-5498, from Boston. www.gwvtravel.com.

Horizon Tours, ☎ 800-395-0025, from New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore.

JRS Tours, ☎ 800-526-2422, from New York, Newark, Philadelphia and Baltimore.

Magic Carpet Vacations, ☎ 888-767-7155, from Philadelphia, Boston and Washington, DC.

Royal Travel Service, ☎ 800-245-4990, from New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Boston and Baltimore.

StudentCity.Com, ☎ 888-SPRINGBREAK, from New York, Newark and Boston.

Student Travel Services, ☎ 800-648-4849, from New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Boston and Baltimore.

Sunburst Holidays, ☎ 800-SUNBURST, from New York, Newark and Boston.

Sun Splash Tours, Inc., ☎ 800-426-7710, from New York.

Travel Impressions, ☎ 800-284-0044, from New York, Newark, Philadelphia and Boston.

US Airways Vacations, ☎ 800-455-0123, from Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Baltimore and Boston.

VHR Worldwide, ☎ 800-NEED-A-VILLA, from New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Boston and Baltimore.

Taxi Service

Taxis are the easiest mode of travel and can be obtained at any resort. Look for red PPV (Public Passenger Vehicle) license plates; these indicate legitimate taxis. Agree on the price with the driver before you depart.

Car Rentals

Driving in Jamaica isn't just a way to get from point A to point B; it seems to be a national sport. Cars pass other passing cars, all in the face of oncoming traffic. Warnings that "undertakers love overtakers" have done no good, and Jamaica still has an alarming rate of traffic fatalities.

Here are some tips you'd be well-advised to note:

- If you are driving, expect the unexpected.
- Strictly limit night driving. If you are caught out on the roads at night, be on the lookout for cars without lights and for abandoned cars that do not have flashing lights.

- Always watch for pedestrians.
- Don't assume that cars have properly functioning brake lights.
- Service stations are open daily, but they accept only cash so plan ahead.

On a recent trip from Port Antonio to Ocho Rios, a car in front of us suddenly stopped to make a right turn without benefit of brake lights or a turn signal, sending our van lurching as the taxi driver hit his brakes. This was just hours after a car sideswiped us while trying to pass – and then kept going at full speed.

Still want to rent a car?

Rental cars are pricey, and are available from most major rental companies. Drivers must be at least 25 years old and possess a valid driver's license. Bond, with either a credit card or cash, must be posted. The speed limit is 30 mph in town and 50 mph on the highways.

CAR RENTAL AGENCIES	
KINGSTON	
Avis	☎ 876/952-0762
Budget Car Rental	☎ 876-924-8762 or 924-8626 (airport)
Econocar Rentals	☎ 876-927-676111 (Lady Musgrave Road)
Fiesta Car Rentals	☎ 876-926-013314 (Waterloo Road)
Hertz	☎ 876-924-8028
Island Car Rentals	☎ 876-926-5991 (17 Antigua Avenue)
MANDEVILLE	
Maxdan Car Rentals & Tours	☎ 876-962-5341 (6 North Race Course Road)
Millinex Rentals	☎ 876-962-3542 (3 Villa Road)
Moon Glow Car Rental	☎ 876-962-9097 (3 Caledonia Road)
NEGRIL	
Dollar Rent-A-Car	☎ 876-957-4110
Paradise Jeep & Car Rental	☎ 876-957-4213
Safari Auto Rental	☎ 876-957-3306
OCHO RIOS	
Bargain Rent-A-Car	☎ 876-974-8047 (Pineapple Place)
Island Car Rentals	☎ 876-974-2666 (Carib Arcade, Main St.)

CAR RENTAL AGENCIES	
MONTEGO	
Budget	☎ 876-952-3838 (airport); 953-9765 (Ironshore)
Caribbean Car Rentals	☎ 876-952-0664 (19 Gloucester Ave.)
Central Rent-A-Car	☎ 876-952-3347 (25 Gloucester Ave)
Discount Rent-A-Car	☎ 876-952-1943 (airport)
Island Car Rentals	☎ 876-952-5771 (airport); 953-9694 (Ironshore)
Thrifty Car Rental	☎ 876-952-5825 (28 Queen Dr. near airport)
PORT ANTONIO	
Eastern Rent-A-Car	☎ 876-993-4364
Waves Enterprises	☎ 876-993-32063 Boundbrook Ave.

Rental cars are fairly scarce, so try to make arrangements before you arrive. Expect to pay between US$65 and $110 per day.

There are rest stops along the longest stretches of highway. Travelers driving between Montego Bay and Ocho Rios should look for the Travel Halt between Falmouth and Runaway Bay on the left side of the road; here you can stop for a restroom break and refreshment (not to mention the chance to buy a souvenir).

AUTHORS' TIP: *All the tour buses stop at this Travel Halt, so if it looks busy, just continue down the road and look for a restaurant.*

DRIVING TIMES WITHIN JAMAICA	
Kingston to Mandeville	1 to 2 hrs
Montego Bay to Negril	1 hr
Montego Bay to Ocho Rios	under 2 hrs
Ocho Rios to Port Antonio	under 2 hrs
Ocho Rios to Kingston	under 1 hr
Port Antonio to Kingston	under 2 hrs

On Foot

Away from the major traffic areas, Jamaica is an excellent destination for travelers on foot. The island's varying terrain presents a full menu of walking and hiking challenges, from gentle beach walks to rolling hill strolls to lung-busting climbs in the mountains.

Jamaicans themselves are walkers. Drive down any country road and you'll see locals out on foot conducting business and running errands, greeting friends and neighbors as they walk. The country areas are friendly places and you'll be expected to greet everyone with a "good morning" or "good afternoon" or you'll be considered just plain mannerless.

In the resort areas, however, a walk on your own will draw hasslers. Expect walks in Ocho Rios, Montego Bay and Negril to attract *ganja* sellers, who will offer their goods and services. For peaceful walks, head to the countryside.

WARNING: *While in rural areas, stay on marked roads. If you take to the trails, check with locals first for good hikes.* Ganja *farmers have their stash in fields throughout the island and you don't want to inadvertently stroll up on one of those fields.*

Scooters

Okay, we already warned you about the cars. We're going to warn you again – even more strongly – about the dangers of traveling on scooters. Buzzing around the island with the breeze in your hair may be what you've seen in travel ads, but expect to experience apocalyptic driving conditions. Drivers will pass you without enough room, you'll have to dodge potholes the size of meteor craters, and goats that wander into the road appear to have scores to settle.

If you insist on driving a scooter (remember, we warned you), most hotels and resorts can arrange rentals. Prices run about $45 for a moped up to about $70 for a motorcycle. You'll need to pay a hefty deposit.

Bicycles

Bicycles may be rented at many of the larger hotels; the resort areas also have bicycle rental companies. Make sure you wear the helmet (usually provided). Some touring companies offer guided bike rides, and we cover these in the *Adventures on Wheels* sections.

Mountain biking is a popular activity. Several companies offer guided moutain bike rides along quiet trails; again, we've highlighted these in the *Adventures on Wheels* section for each area.

Guided Tours

Guided tours are a good way for first-time visitors to get an overview of Jamaica. We've taken many excellent guided tours of Jamaica from impromptu taxi tours by knowledgeable drivers to fully-led guided tours that offered us a peek at a larger region than we could have covered on our own in the same amount of time.

■ Recommended Tour Operators

Here's a sampling of some recommended tour companies:

Barrett Adventures, ☎ 876-382-6384, info@barrettadventures.com, wwwbarrettadventures.com.

Errol and Carolyn Barrett offer customized tours based on travelers' interests. One of Jamaica's top ecotourism operators, it has excursions to the Blue Mountains, Kingston and many off-the-beaten-path destinations not covered by other tours. Barrett Adventures is an excellent choice for travelers looking to see the real Jamaica, away from the tourist areas. We recently interviewed Carolyn Barrett about the tours she and her husband, Errol, offer.

■ ADVENTURE TALKS
Interview with Barrett Adventures

Q. How do your tours differ from some other guided tours?

A. They differ in every possible way! For example, the Blue Mountain Tour offered by other tour companies carries people along the north coast to St. Mary's Banana Plantation, up through Castleton with a stop at a coffee plantation and the botanical gardens, then down to Kingston to the Bob Marley Museum or Devon House. This tour takes 10 hours (eight of it spent driving), does not even reach the Blue Mountains, and visits only two attractions in New Kingston. Our tours to the Blue Mountains are tailored to meet the needs of each group. We spend a lot of time deciding what kinds of activities interest them, and I make many suggestions. We might visit a fabulous coffee plantation which grows, roasts and sells the best of the best Blue Mountain Coffee. You can spend the day seeing the farm from Alex's Land Rover, hiking around the growing plants and swimming at their private waterfall. Another spot (this one accessible by four-wheel-drive only) is a botanical garden called Cinchona. It used to be the site of the Governor-General's summer house until it was damaged by hurricane Gilbert in 1988.

The garden was started in 1875 with plants imported from all over the British empire. There are whole gardens of orchids, lilies and ginger. Cedars from Lebanon, datura from Japan, even eucalyptus from Australia. Climbing Blue Mountain is fun. I take people to a hostel at the 4,500-foot level and guide them up to the peak myself. We leave the guest house at 2:30 am and climb by flashlight in order to reach the top at dawn. On a clear day we can see all three coasts plus Cuba. If our clients want to see Kingston, we allow them to choose from the dozens of art galleries, historic buildings and other points of interest. Also within striking distance is Port Royal, where pirates once lived. They can go scuba diving to the sunken city or ride a Zodiac to see the birds nesting and spot shy crocodiles.

I don't know of any other tour operator in Jamaica who offers the whole experience. I have a luxurious four-wheel-drive capable of driving up a wall, knowledge of out-of-the-way places and the energy to go there and do it.

Q. What would you say to encourage travelers to get out of the hotels and see more of Jamaica during their stay?

A. Generally, my guests don't need much encouragement to get out of their hotels. I make them aware of all options. People are excited to learn about our culture and history.

Q. Describe some of the ecotourism experiences on your tours that adventure travelers might particularly enjoy?

A. Part of the answer to this question is in the answer to question number one. Some additional experiences would involve swimming a couple of miles in a very clear spring with three friendly manatees; snorkeling down a jungle stream in search of crocodiles; hiking the Hellshire hills to find iguanas; swimming at untouched beaches; climbing waterfalls that are little visited.

Q. Your tours are specialized to the traveler's interests. Give us an example of an interesting itinerary that you helped develop.

A. I have several week-long tours to suit different tastes. For instance, a birding tour to various venues to watch for waterbirds, hummingbirds, mountain and swamp birds, parrots, etc.; scuba diving tours for experienced divers to visit some unspoiled coral reefs, watch nurse sharks mating or see the big pelagics attracted to the offshore cays where the fishermen clean their catch. Island history tours staying in small guest houses and seeing the real local culture is another popular choice. Here is a sample itinerary.

Day One: Pick-up at airport; lunch at local restaurant; visit Gallery of West Indian Art; hummingbird sanctuary; check in on south coast, swim, relax; dinner at Culloden Café.

Day Two: Breakfast at resort; stop by Treasure Beach and lunch at Little Ochee; travel to Alligator Hole to snorkel with the manatees; check in at Milk River for mineral baths; dinner.

Day Three: Breakfast at Farquahar Beach; pass through Kingston. Stop by National Gallery, Bob Marley Museum or Devon House; spend afternoon at Old Tavern Estate, see how Blue Mountain Coffee is grown (available to purchase at discounted rates); check in at Port Antonio; dinner at local restaurant.

Day Four: Spend day at various beaches; eat jerk chicken where it was invented at Boston Beach; cocktail at Cruise Bar (where Tom Cruise filmed *Cocktail*); dinner at local restaurant.

Day Five: Visit Reach Falls; lunch and swim at Winnefred Beach; raft on the Rio Grande; dinner at Dickie's

Day Six: Visit Firefly; travel to Robbin's Bay.

Day Seven: Hike to waterfall and black sand beach.

Day Eight: Visit Dunn's Falls; Wassi Art/Harmony Hall in Ocho Rios. Return to Montego Bay Airport.

CountryStyle Community Experience, PO Box 60, 62 Ward Ave., Mandeville, Jamaica, ☎ 876-962-7758, fax 876-962-0700, www.countrystylecommunityexperience.com.

These unique tours specialize in community visits. You can set your own itinerary, visiting those establishments you're interested in – whether that means local churches, hospitals, roadside bars, discos, gardens, schools, farms or private homes. Along with tours, CountryStyle also offers packages with accommodations in small hotels, guest houses and even private homes. This operation is headed by Diana McIntyre-Pike, one of the dynamos of Jamaica tourism and a great source of information and contacts. We highly recommend a CountryStyle tour as a way to step off the beaten path and get to know Jamaica on a one-to-one basis.

Expo Garden Tours 70 Great Oak, Redding, CT 06897, ☎ 203-938-0410 or 800-448-2685; fax 203-938-0427.

Garden tours all over the island scheduled on occasion. A recent offering included an eight-day tour of tropical gardens with four nights accommodation at Enchanted Garden and three nights at Strawberry Hill. It allowed for five full days of tours to the island's finest gardens.

Field Guides Incorporated, 9433 Bee Cave Rd., Building 1, Suite 150, Austin, TX 78733, ☎ 800-728-4953 or 512-263-7295, fax 512-263-0117, fieldguides@fieldguides.com, www.fieldguides.com.

Of special interest to birders, these professionally operated excursions take travelers into rural areas to some of the best birding sites. Stops include the John Crow Mountains and Blue Mountains, Cockpit Country and more. Tours are led by experienced birders and naturalists who can identify the island's numerous species.

Safari Tours, Mammee Bay, Montego Bay, ☎ 876-972-2639 or 876-919-7900, Safari@cwjamaica.com.

Safari has several unique options. The all-day Jeep Safari (Monday and Wednesday) takes a look at island history, from Christopher Columbus to Bob Marley. The Jeep Safari through the Blue Mountains (Thursday and Friday) travels high into the national park and includes a tour of Sangster's Liquor Factory and a visit to the Bob Marley Museum in Kingston. The Taste of Jamaica Tour (Monday through Saturday) is a half-day visit to Prospect Plantation and features horseback riding, and a visit to Green Grotto Caves and up Dunn's River Falls. The Dunn's River Falls Bicycle Tour (Mondays only) takes you on a downhill bike ride to Dunn's River Falls. Other excursions include horseback riding and river tubing (Monday through Saturday). One trip tackles river tubing in the morning and shopping in the afternoon.

■ ADVENTURE TALKS

Interview with Safari Tours

We recently interviewed Birgit Moenkemoeller of Safari Tours about the unique tours offered by this operator.

Q. How do your tours differ from some others?

A. We are an exciting, fun, adventure tour company. We want to show the real untouched nature in a safe inviroment. My drivers and guides are trained to take care all guest needs. We want to make every day a statement to promote Jamaica at its best.

Q. We'd like to hear more about your Blue Mountain Trek. What experiences will travelers enjoy on that tour?

A. Blue Mountain Trek is for experienced hikers only, because of the climate and the height. It is all steep, uphill and mostly wet because of the clouds. Participants must wake up in the middle of the night to hike and see sunrise, one of Jamaica's best experiences. We do this tour only on a group basis. Guests must have hiking boots with them and must be in top physical condition.

Q. We'd also like to learn more about your Bicycle Tour. How does a tour like this help travelers see Jamaica up close and personal? What fitness level would you recommend for these tours?

A. The route is 95% downhill, and you must comfortable with off-road riding. This, along with our River Tubing Safari, is a peaceful way to experience the island. And many guests enjoy the fact that it requires only light exercise.

Q. What would you say to encourage travelers to leave the beach for a day and see more of Jamaica?

A. A beach is (in all Caribbean destinations) pretty much the same, while Jamaica's interior, with all the nature, historic sites and

attractions is unique. Jamaica has so much to offer that you'd have to come back several times to see it all. We at Safari Tours want to have all our guests back to enjoy Jamaica all over again.

Tourwise, offices in Negril, Montego Bay and Ocho Rios, ☎ 876-974-2332 or 974-2334.

Guided tours of top attractions, including Dunn's River Falls, Black River Safari, rafting, Cockpit Country, Kingston, Mayfield Falls, Blue Lagoon and more. Several languages are spoken – English, French, Spanish, German, Italian and Dutch.

Sunholiday, Holiday Village, Rose Hall, Montego Bay, ☎ 876-953-2837.

Sightseeing tours lasting from one day to several.

Touring Society Of Jamaica, ☎ 876-975-7158 or 876-944-8400, lyndaleeburks@yahoo.com.

A unique tour operator. Since 1991 the Touring Society has focussed on excursions away from the main tourist spots. Themes include arts, architecture, music, gardens, natural history and epicurean delights. Each trip is tailored to individual interests and might include such activities as an overnight trip to the Blue Mountains to sample coffee, an afternoon at Spanish Bridge in the Ocho Rios countryside, or a week-long quest for Jamaica's arts and crafts. But the Touring Society of Jamaica is especially known for its mountain hikes into the surrounding Blue Mountains. Tours include the Old Tavern Blue Mountain Coffee Estate (one of the top coffee plantations on the island), which offers a picnic lunch; the Fairy Glade Trail and Newcastle, a hike through several ecosystems, ending the day with sunset at the Gap Café; National Gallery and Spanish Town Tour, into the city and the nearby historic community of Spanish Town; Kingston Nightlife, a personalized tour of the nightlife for which Kingston is known.

GETTING INVOLVED

If you want to step beyond the traditional tourist experience, contact **Global Volunteers** (☎ 800-487-1074, 651-407-6100; 375 E. Little Canada Rd., St. Paul, MN 55117). This company works in three Blue Mountain villages to match volunteers with residents on construction projects such as installing water systems, building schools or church facilities or assisting in classrooms. Participants are met at the Kingston airport and stay in community buildings (two to four per room). Amenities include indoor toilets, water and showers. Local foods are served. For more on the program, check out the website, www.globalvolunteers.org.

■ Accommodations

Jamaica has a huge range of accommodations, with something to suit every budget and interest. While the island is perhaps best known for its all-inclusive resorts, you'll also find business hotels, small inns, guest houses and private villas. There are few condominiums.

Some of the options we've selected offer around-the-clock fun and evening theme parties, while others encourage you to find your own entertainment. Some are located on the beach, while others are up in the mountains with grandiose views. Full-service properties have everything from beauty salons to jewelry shops to a half-dozen bars and restaurants located on their property. Simpler accommodations might offer dinner only (albeit in a former greathouse built over 200 years ago).

All-Inclusive Resorts

Most travel experts acknowledge that the all-inclusive concept began in Jamaica with the Couples resort in Ocho Rios. The idea has caught on like wildfire and today you can find all-inclusive properties to suit a variety of budgets, as well as resorts aimed at particular types of travelers – families, couples, sports enthusiasts, golfers, etc.

As the name suggests, all-inclusive means that all activities, meals, drinks, transfers and tips are included in the price. This means that you're free to try anything you like without worrying about spending your vacation budget for the next five years. Ever been curious about windsurfing? Take a lesson. Want to know how to reggae dance? Throw off your shoes and jump in line. Wonder how those brightly colored drinks with the funny umbrellas taste? Belly up to the bar. You're free to try it all.

Some travelers don't like all-inclusives because of the concern (not unfounded) that once you've paid for the whole package you'll be unlikely to leave the property and sample local restaurants or explore the island.

We love them, but we are careful to balance our stay with island tours or visits to off-property restaurants. Even with these extra expenditures, we've found most of these resorts to be economical choices.

We have reviewed many all-inclusive properties in this book. At Sandals resorts, which are for heterosexual couples only, you can hop from resort to resort and enjoy facilities and dining privileges at each; transportation is provided free of charge to dine or just enjoy the other local properties. SuperClubs originated in Jamaica and offers a variety of properties for varying interests at varying prices. On the lower end, the Breezes properties offer all-inclusive luxury at affordable rates. For couples traveling with children, Boscobel Beach features supervised fun for the kids so the

two of you can enjoy some private time. Fun-seekers will find plenty of action at Hedonism II and III, and luxury lovers can be pampered at either Grand Lido Negril, Grand Lido Braco or Grand Lido Sans Souci.

> **AUTHOR'S TIP:** *SuperClubs also offers the best lovers' bargain in the Caribbean: free weddings.*

Small Inns

If you're looking for peace and quiet, a small inn might be your best choice. They offer good getaways and a chance to immerse yourself in more of the local atmosphere. It's that opportunity to meet local residents, taste island dishes and retreat from the typical resort experience that draws folks to the all-too-often-overlooked inns.

More and more travelers are discovering the island's over 100 small inns (defined as properties with fewer than 50 guest rooms). Inns vary from modest properties (Verney's in Montego Bay) to luxurious getaways (Strawberry Hill, located in the misty Blue Mountains on the island's south side).

"I am really keen on the development and promotion of small inns," said Chris Blackwell, owner of Strawberry Hill and founder of the Island Records label which brought Bob Marley to fame. "They give visitors the chance to get involved with the culture and lifestyle, the island's strongest assets."

■ Selecting a Small Inn

Just as you would if booking a B&B in the US, ask plenty of questions before booking. These properties may offer limited services and may be more restrictive. If applicable, be sure to ask:

- Is smoking permitted indoors?
- Are children allowed as guests?
- Is breakfast served at one time or as guests wander in?
- Are intimate tables available or are meals served family-style?
- Are special dietary considerations met?
- Is there a minimum stay?
- Does a remote location necessitate a rental car?

Villas

Some travelers' idea of a real getaway is to immerse themselves in the island, to feel as if they are residents. One of the best ways to do this, especially if you're enjoying an extended stay, is to rent a villa.

Check for villas licensed by the Jamaica Tourist Board. Licensed properties have a valid health certificate, and all food and beverage employees have a valid Food Handler's Permit. The villas offer adequate security, telephones, are staffed with trained personnel, are approved by the local planning authority, have a taxpayer registration number and receive an in-depth inspection by the Standards Department of the Tourism Product Development Company. We've seen these inspections and can vouch that they are vigorous. Inspectors look for everything from radio contact between security guards and main office or police to easily accessible fire extinguishers to adequate first aid kits.

Villas vary in price, services and level of luxury. Before you make a commitment, check:

- **Maid service.** Many villas offer maid service before your arrival and after your departure; additional cleaning can be arranged for a surcharge. At other properties, daily maid service may be included.
- **Groceries.** Can you send a deposit for groceries and have a cook stock up before your arrival? Finding a refrigerator and cabinets filled with your favorites can be a big boost after a long flight.
- **Cook service.** Many villas can arrange for a cook to provide three meals a day, dinner only, or just one special meal. In Jamaica, villas typically include cook service.
- **Air conditioning.** Don't assume your villa is air conditioned; ever-present trade winds make this an optional feature. If it's more of a necessity than an option to you, inquire.
- **Car rental.** Villas are usually located away from the resort areas. Ask if you should rent a car to avoid pricey taxi rides for long hauls.
- **Minimum stay.** Unlike the hotels, which request a minimum stay of three nights, villas often require a minimum stay of seven nights.

VILLA RENTAL AGENCIES	
At Home & Abroad	☎ 212-421-9165, fax 212-752-1591
Bluefields Bay Villas	☎ 202-232-4010, fax 703-549-6517
Caribbean Villas	☎ 813-651-9551, fax 813-651-9679
Euro Connections, Germany	☎ 0211-940-273, fax 0211-408-9301
International Chapters, England	☎ 0171-722-0722, fax 0171-722-9140
International Travel & Resorts	☎ 212-476-9444, fax 212-476-9467

VILLA RENTAL AGENCIES	
Island Hideways	☎ 410-884-0400, fax 410-884-3636
Jamaica Assoc. of Villas & Apts.	☎ 800-845-5276
JAVA, England	☎ 0990-329-623, fax 0121-554-7315
Jamaica Villa Vacations	☎ 847-696-1690, fax 847-698-5058
Jamaican Travel Specialist	☎ 510-489-9552, fax 510-489-2318
LaCure Secret Escapes	☎ 416-968-2374, fax 416-968-2204
Palmer & Parker, England	☎ 0490-815-411, fax 0490-814-84
Passport Villas	☎ 770-998-1725, fax 770-642-7465
Prestbury Travel, England	☎ 0625-828-222, fax 0625-829-322
Prospect Plantation Villas, Holland	☎ 31-70-362-4770, fax 31-70-360-4480
Resortrep Villas Inc.	☎ 813-963-0762, fax 813-963-0762
Russell Villas	☎ 876-953-3707/3009, fax 876-953-2732
Selective Vacation Service	☎ 876-974-2980/5187, fax 876-974-2359
Sunsational Vacations	☎ 305-893-5580, fax 305-899-0457
Tour Host International	☎ 212-953-7980, fax 212-370-7893
Travel Jam	☎ 301-429-9730, fax 301-429-9736
Tryall Luxury Villas	☎ 305-670-4911, fax 305-670-4948
VHR Worldwide	☎ 201-767-9393, fax 201-767-5510
Vacation Network	☎ 305-673-8822, fax 305-673-5666
Villa Leisure	☎ 561-624-9000, fax 561-622-9097
Villas & Apartments Abroad	☎ 212-759-1025, fax 212-755-8316
Villas Caribe	☎ 303-680-3100, fax 303-680-3900
Villas Etcetera	☎ 609-368-4100, fax 609-967-7487
Villas of Discovery Bay	☎ 876-925-0893, fax 876-925-9673
Villas of Distinction	☎ 914-273-3331, fax 914-273-3387
Villawise	☎ 876-974-5877/1890, fax 876-974-5362
Xaymaca Holland Villa Rentals, Holland	☎ 31-41-855-2230, fax 31-41-855-2874

■ Interview with JAVA (Jamaica Association of Villas and Apartments)

JAVA is one of Jamaica's most extensive villa representatives. We recently talked with Carmen McKnight, spokesperson for the company, about villa properties as an option for adventure travelers.

Q. What is the advantage of staying in a Jamaican villa rather than in a hotel or resort?

A. The villa guest really makes friends with Jamaica. They see the country and meet the people. Villas are also perfect for families.

Q. What amenities do the villas represented by JAVA share?

A. They all have a maid, cook and a gardener.

Q. Are villas well suited for adventure travelers?

A. They are perfect for an adventurous traveler who wants to get out and experience the country.

■ Travel Concerns, A-Z

Banking

ATM machines accept only Jamaican bank cards. Cash advances can be made on some credit cards if you have a PIN number. Without your PIN, you'll need to visit the bank clerk, which can be a slow proposition.

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *We ran out of cash in Negril recently and spent close to two hours obtaining a cash advance from the local bank. There are better ways to spend your holiday. Make it easy on yourself and just bring cash and/or travelers checks.*

You'll need cash for market purchases, taxi rides and the departure tax (presently US $27 per person). Banks are open 9 am-2 pm, Monday to Thursday; 9 am-12 pm and 2:30-5 pm on Friday.

Clinics & Hospitals

Jamaica has medical facilities in all resort areas as well as in Kingston. To call for an ambulance anywhere on island, dial 110.

■ Montego Bay

Mo Bay Hope, Half Moon Resort, ☎ 876-853-3981. This 24-hour medical diagnostic center has a dialysis center.

Cornwall Regional Hospital, Mt. Salem, Montego Bay, ☎ 876-952-6683.

■ South Coast

Mandeville Hospital, 32 Hargreaves Ave., Mandeville, ☎ 876-962-2067.
Black River Hospital, 45 High Street, Mandeville, ☎ 876-965-2212.

■ Port Antonio

Port Antonio General Hospital, Naylors Hill, Port Antonio, ☎ 876-993-2646.

■ St. Ann's

St. Ann's Bay Hospital, St. Ann's Bay, ☎ 876-972-2272. Includes hyperbaric chamber for scuba emergencies.

■ Kingston

University Hospital, Mona, Kingston, ☎ 876-927-1620.

Credit Cards

Major credit cards are accepted around the island, but remember that you can't use your ATM card at the local bank.

Crime

This is a serious problem. Use the same precautions you'd exercise at home and then some. Crime is particularly bad in Kingston, as in any metropolitan area. Use big city precautions and heed advice to stay away from downtown, especially after dark. In this book we've pointed out areas in Kingston that are especially dangerous. It's also a good idea to check with your hotel concierge for safety suggestions in Kingston.

Around the rest of the island, use common-sense precautions. As a tourist in a country where poverty is rampant, you are viewed as wealthy. You may very well be familiar with Jamaica's latest problem due to news headlines. "In April 1999 Jamaica experienced a brief slowdown in tourism due to riots over an increase in the gasoline tax," explained Francis Tulloch, Minister of Tourism. "The British left us a great thing called democracy. Our government decided to increase gas tax by 30%. Democracy prevailed. I think it is something for us to be proud of that when our people spoke, we listened. What took place during that demonstration is our Jamaican people recognizing the importance of tourism to the country. Many visitors did not realize there was a demonstration. Those who did visit during that time were, for the most part, treated well. The silver lin-

ing is the fact that the Jamaican people have now accepted tourism as vitally important to the survival of this country."

"Jamaica is not just a beach, it is a country," he continued. "Because we are a high profile country, the negatives are always more prominent in the press. The unity of the public and the private sector in Jamaica is such that there is nothing that can hold Jamaica back."

Jamaica continues to focus its attention on visitor safety. "We are being honest with issues of safety," said Jamaica Tourist Board chairman Adrian Robinson. "We take tourism extremely seriously. We are focusing our government's attention on this." Incidents against tourists have been on the decrease, falling from 380 in 1989 to 280 in 1998.

If you do experience crime, seek out the Jamaica police. Jamaica constables wear blue striped shirts and black pants with red stripes along the side. The Island Special Constabulary Force Officers wear the same uniform, but they have blue stripes on the side of their trousers. They carry badges and identification at all times.

To reach the police, dial 119 or call 0991-9999 for emergency help. Visitor information booths throughout the island (see *Sources of Information*, below) also have radio contact with the police.

■ Protect Yourself

Petty crime is very common, and hotels have made great efforts to keep security tight while at the same time making guests feel at ease. But part of the responsibility for your things lies on your shoulders as well. Here are a few tips:

- Don't leave money on the beach while you swim. Invest in a waterproof pouch for keys and necessities and lock other items in your car or hotel room.
- Don't leave cash and valuables in your hotel room; use your hotel safe.
- Don't leave valuables unlocked in your rental car. Many of Jamaica' rental vehicles are open-air jeeps.
- Don't go out for walks on lonely stretches of beach or on quiet roads after dark.
- Don't pick up hitchhikers.
- Don't walk in isolated areas alone at night.

Currency

The Jamaican dollar fluctuates with the market. At press time the Jamaican dollar was worth about J $39.65 to US $1. Most establishments welcome US and Canadian dollars, and throughout the island, prices are

often stated in US dollars (especially in resort communities). Outside the major resorts, prices are given in local currency.

CURRENCY CONVERSION CHART					
US Dollars to Jamaican Dollars		**Canadian Dollars** to Jamaican Dollars		**British Pounds** to Jamaican Dollars	
1	39.65	1	28.49	1	65.82
5	198.25	5	142.43	5	329.09
10	396.50	10	284.85	10	658.18
50	2,180.75	50	1,424.26	50	3,290.89
75	2,973.75	75	2,136.39	75	4,936.34
100	3,965.00	100	2,849.00	100	6,582.00
500	19,825.00	500	14,243.00	500	32,909.00
1,000	39,650.00	1,000	28,485.00	1,000	65,818.00
5,000	198,250.00	5,000	142,426.00	5,000	32,9089.00

Note: *The above chart should be used as a guideline only. Always check current rates before exchanging currency.*

Departure Tax

Departure tax from Montego Bay and Kingston airports (not for intra-island flights) is US $25. Departure from Ocho Rios and Montego Bay cruise ports is US $15 per person. The tax is payable only in cash. Many airlines include the departure tax in the ticket price.

Dress

With its strong British history, the citizens of Jamaica are modest, conservative people who generally frown upon displays of skin. Although nudity or topless bathing is permitted on some beaches, it is typically not practiced by locals. Most islanders follow a more conservative style of dress than seen in US beach communities.

Bathing suits are appropriate only for swimming; when off the beach, wear a cover-up. Bare chests are also frowned upon outside the beach area. However, leisure wear – T-shirts, shorts, sundresses and sandals – will be readily accepted in any Jamaican community.

High season (mid-December through mid-April) is the dressiest period, the only time when jackets and occasionally ties will be required at a few restaurants for dinner. Generally, “casually elegant” or “resort casual” is

the order of the day, an indication that it's fine to wear polo shirts, khakis and sundresses.

Drugs

Marijuana, or *ganja* as its known locally, is illegal throughout Jamaica. Does this mean that you won't see it? Not at all.

Marijuana can be found virtually everywhere. We've seen Rastas smoking spliffs the size of cigars right along the roadside. If you take a tourist bus from Montego Bay to Negril, you'll see vendors jump from behind a tree with a wad of *ganja* and a cigarette the size of a small baton as the bus slows down to make a sharp turn.

But, for all the smooth talk of these professional sellers, remember that marijuana is illegal. Drug penalties are becoming stiffer, and drug prevention measures more stringent. Customs screens bags of passengers both leaving and entering the country, using dogs in most cases.

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *The open flaunting of drugs is a major turnoff for tourists, who often feel threatened. However, we've found that politeness, coupled with firmness and respect, brings an end to the discussion without anger.*

The come-ons to tourists vary from vendor to vendor, but expect to be approached by friendly young men who introduce themselves by name, shake your hand and ask, "is this your first time to Jamaica?" Other approaches include, "Remember me from yesterday?" and "I met your friend down the beach." From there the offers extend from motorcycle rides to see fields of *ganja* to attempts at selling "party stuff" or "stuff I grew myself."

As is the case with market and beach vendors, dealing with drug entrepreneurs requires firm politeness. "No, thank you" will generally end the transaction. Stay cool, move on, and realize that these businessmen are just out to make a buck, which on this island is not always an easy proposition.

Adventure travelers should keep in mind that marijuana is grown in fields on the island and that the farmers are fiercely protective of their crop. While exploring off the beaten path, be sure you know where you're headed. Talk with local guides and tourist offices about your planned route so that you don't find yourself stumbling upon a well-guarded ganja field.

Electricity

Jamaica runs on 110 volts, 50 cycles. American and Canadian appliances can be used, but you might find that they run a little hot. A few hotels use

220 volts and standard American plugs. Be sure to ask when you make your hotel booking.

Embassies

All the embassies are in Kingston.

US Embassy
2 Oxford Road, Kingston
☎ 876-929-4850 or 920-9565

Canadian High Commission
30 Knutsford Boulevard, Kingston
☎ 876-926-1500

British High Commission
Trafalgar Road, Kingston
☎ 876-926-9050

Japanese Embassy
32 Trafalgar Road, Kingston
☎ 876-929-3389

Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany
10 Waterloo Road, Kingston
☎ 876-926-6728

French Embassy
13 Hillcrest Avenue, Kingston
☎ 876-978-1297

Gratuities

A service charge is added to the bill at most restaurants. If that's not the case, a 10-15% tip is customary. Remember that tips are part of the package at many all-inclusive resorts; check with yours.

■ Tip Guidelines

Restaurants: 15% of bill, but check first to see if a service charge has already been included.

Bars: US $1 per drink.

Airport skycap-porter: 50¢ per bag.

Taxis: 10-15% for longer rides, but not expected for short ones.

Hotel bell desk: US $1 per bag or to call a cab.

Hotel housekeeping: US $1 per person, per day at non-all-inclusives.

Hotel room service: 15% of bill at non-all-inclusives.

Haircare-personal services: 15% of bill.

Immunizations

No immunizations are required unless you have visited the following areas within the past six weeks: Asia, Africa, Central America, South America, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Trinidad or Tobago. If you have visited one of the locales recently, check with the tourist board prior to your trip to see if they require immunization. We once came to Jamaica after a trip to Bangkok and were told by the Jamaican consulate's office that a nurse would give us a card with symptoms to look out for and a number to call if any medical problems arose, but on arrival in MoBay we were not stopped at Immigration.

Marriage

Getting married here is easy and inexpensive, with just a 24-hour waiting period after you arrive on the island. No blood tests are required. Most larger resorts have excellent wedding consultants on staff who can handle all the arrangements, from license to flowers. Contact your resort beforehand to get the paperwork rolling. You'll need to supply the following:

- Proof of citizenship. Bring along a certified copy of your birth certificate (one with a raised seal), which includes your father's name.
- Parents' written consent, if one of you is under 21.
- Proof of divorce (if applicable). Either a certified copy or original Certificate of Divorce is required.
- Copy of Death Certificate for widow or widower.
- If paperwork is not in English, you'll need to have a notarized translated copy of all documents and a photocopy of the original document.

If your hotel doesn't have a wedding coordinator to handle the details, contact the Ministry of National Security (☎ 876-922-0080) before your trip to apply for the marriage license. The cost is J $200 (about US $5). You'll also need to arrange for a marriage officer; the cost is about US $50-250.

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *You'll probably need to fax or courier copies of your documents to the resort, but be sure to bring along the original copy on your trip!*

Pets

Leave the dogs – and the cats, ferrets, gerbils and every other four-legged creature – at home. No pets are permitted entry into

Jamaica. The reason is simple: Jamaica has no rabies and doesn't want any.

Photography

Don't take photographs without permission. If you're in the market and want to catch one of the vendors on film, buy a small trinket and then ask for permission for a photo; we have rarely been denied.

Sunburn

Nothing will slow down your vacation faster than a sunburn. You'll be surprised how easily the sun will damage your skin, even if you already have a good base tan. At this southern latitude, good sunscreen, applied liberally and often, is a must. This ailment ranks as the number one travelers' concern throughout the Caribbean. You are especially vulnerable while on the water; sea breezes may cool the skin but don't prevent burns. Many snorkelers wear T-shirts to protect exposed backs from the strong rays.

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *Sunscreen is sold everywhere, but prices are steep. Plan ahead and bring your favorite brand from home.*

Telephones & Faxes

Much as we love Jamaica, we have to admit that it is one of the worst places in the Caribbean from which to make a telephone call. The reason? Most American telephone companies will not accept Jamaica-based credit card calls due to the high volume of fraudulent card use. But there are solutions.

- **Dial direct from your hotel**. This is the most expensive solution. If you do this, call home and have the recipient call you right back, as calls made from the mainland to Jamaica are far less expensive. Hotel markups on your outgoing call are hefty.
- **Call collect.** This is less expensive than a direct call, but pricier than our next option.
- **Use a Jamaican phone card**, which are sold at local grocery stores and come in various denominations. A J $200 card buys about three minutes worth of talk time to the US.

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *We once bought an international calling card in Miami that wouldn't work in Jamaica. Wait until you arrive on the island to purchase the card.*

Fax service is available at just about all the resorts and is another good way to keep in touch. Many places charge nothing to receive a fax and only a few dollars to transmit one. Within Jamaica, there are two telephone charges: J 15¢ per minute for calls within the parish and J 76¢ per minute (or J 38¢ during off-peak times) for calls from one parish to another.

Time

Jamaica operates on Eastern Standard Time and does not observe daylight savings time.

Water

Water is drinkable and safe, but you'll find bottled water available at restaurants and grocery stores.

Rainy Day Activities

Into every trip a little rain must fall (or at least it seems that way in the Caribbean, especially on islands as green as Jamaica). In Jamaica, these rainy days are often called "baby making days." If you're looking for activties outside your hotel room, here's a selection of rainy-day options for adventure travelers.

- **Caves.** The weather stays the same in caves, no matter how much rain is coming down outside. Fortunately, Jamaica is home to several caves, ranging from well-lighted caverns such as Nonsuch Caves to off-the-beaten path holes you'll need a guide to locate. For more on Jamaica's caverns, see the next chapter on *Adventures*.
- **Scuba Diving.** Beneath the sea, it's always wet. We recommend you plan your dive trips for the afternoon hours when the skies are most likely to turn cloudy.
- **Great House Tours.** Even if you're not a history buff, restored great houses dotted over the island offer an interesting look at the plantation period. The best-known great house on the island is Montego Bay's Rose Hall.
- **Submarine Tour.** Montego Bay travelers can have a look at the undersea world with MoBay Undersea Tours on Gloucester Avenue. Okay, it's not really a submarine but a sort of deep glass-bottom boat with portholes. This excellent tour

takes a look at the protected waters of the Montego Bay Marine Park.

- **Shopping.** Whether you're in the market for duty-free goods or woodcarvings (our favorite), shops and roadside stands make excellent diversions on rainy days.
- **Nightclubbing.** Sleep away a few of those rainy hours and save up your energy for an evening of nightclubbing, which is especially good in Montego Bay, Ocho Rios, Negril and Kingston (where the best nightlife is found).

Information Sources

■ Off-Island Tourism Offices

? A good place to start is the Jamaica Tourist Board, ☎ 800-JAMAICA, www.visitjamaica.com. You may also contact your local Jamaica Tourist Board office to request free brochures and maps.

■ In the United States

Jamaica Tourist Board
1320 S. Dixie Hwy., Suite 1101
Coral Gables, FL 33146
☎ 305-665-0557

■ In Canada

Jamaica Tourist Board
303 Eglinton Ave. E, Suite 200
Toronto, Ontario M4P 1LE
☎ 416-482-7850

■ In the UK

Jamaica Tourist Board
1-2 Prince Consort Rd.
London SW7 2BZ
☎ (44) 207-224-0505, fax (44)207-224-0551

■ In Japan

Jamaica Tourist Board
Strategic Tower Building 2F
2-11-1 Shibuya, Shibuya-ku

Tokyo 150-0002
Japan
☎ (81) 3-3400-2974, fax (81) 3-3400-2973

■ In Germany

Jamaica Tourist Board
c/o Fast Forward Marketing
Schwarzbackstrasse 32
40822 Mettman, Germany
☎ 49 (0) 2104 832974, fax 49 (0) 2104 912673

■ In France

Jamaica Tourist Board
☎ 33-1-45-63-4201, fax 33-1-42-25-6640

■ In Italy

Jamaica Tourist Board
c/o Sergat Italia
via Nazionale 230
00/84 Roma, Italy
☎ (39) 06 4890-1255, fax (39) 06 4890-7284

■ In The Netherlands

Jamaica Tourist Board
☎ 31-34-843-0829, fax 31-34-848-2307

■ In Spain

Jamaica Tourist Board
Barcelona
☎ 34-93-4140210, fax 34-93-208657

■ On-Island Tourism Offices

You'll find visitor help stations all over the island. Drop in the office for directions, recommendations, or just to say hello.

■ In Kingston

Kingston has two JTB offices: a desk in the Immigration entry area at Norman Manley International Airport and a main office at 2 St. Lucia Avenue in New Kingston, ☎ 876-929-9200.

■ In Montego Bay

Montego Bay also has two JTB locations: a desk in the Immigration area at Donald Sangster International Airport and another at Cornwall Beach, ☎ 876-952-4425.

■ In Black River

The JTB office is in the Hendriks Building at 2 High Street, ☎ 876-965-2074.

■ In Negril

You'll find the JTB office on the second floor of the Coral Seas Plaza, ☎ 876-957-4243.

■ In Ocho Rios

A JTB office is on the second floor of the Ocean Village Shopping Centre (right above the grocery store), ☎ 876-974-2570.

■ In Port Antonio

The office is in the City Centre Plaza, ☎ 876-993-3051.

■ Media

The largest island newspaper is Kingston's ***The Jamaica Gleaner***, a daily. It is sold at grocery stores and hotel gift shops around the island.

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *To keep up with island news, visit www.jamaica-gleaner.com, which shows selected stories from the paper.*

The Jamaica Observer is published daily and serves as the afternoon paper.

Radio stations include **HOT 102 FM**, **Irie FM** (105.1, 105.5, 107.1, 107.3, 107.7), **KLAS FM** (89.5, 89.1, 89.9), **POWER 106 FM**, **FAME FM** (95.7, 92.7, 91.5, 98.1, 95.7, 95.3, 95.9) and **Radio Jamaica** (94.5, 94.1; AM 550, AM 720).

Two television stations serve the island: **CVM Television** (channel 4 in Kingston, channel 11 in Montego Bay) and **JBC** (channels 7 and 11 in Kingston, channel 10 in Montego Bay).

■ Internet Website

The official website of the Jamaica Tourist Board is www.visitjamaica.com. This site has information on travel planning, activities, accommodations, special events, a visitors' forum and more. You'll find a whole list of additional Jamaica-related websites in the *Appendix*, page 293.

■ ■ ■

Adventuring in Jamaica

The island presents a variety of adventure opportunities for all levels of fitness and activity. Numerous options await both on land and in water.

Most activities revolve around the clear blue waters that surround the island. They include scuba diving, snorkeling, sailing, deep-sea fishing, sunworshipping and beachcombing.

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The Tourism Product Development Company (TPDCO) was given the mandate by the Jamaica government in 1996 to develop and improve Jamaica's tourism product. Their work is reflected in the increased number of watersports operators, tour guides and more. Many of the improvements – from roadside rest stops to nature attractions – are monitored by TPDCO to meet basic health and safety standards. Watersports are regulated, and operators must have a marine board license, a fisheries license where applicable, and a Jamaica Tourist Board license. All operators should also:

- Have valid certifications in rescue procedures, first aid and CPR.
- Have (and know how to use) first aid equipment as well as emergency procedures.
- Have two persons working in all tow boats such as banana boat rides and vessels used for towing parasailers.

Packing for Adventure

All Jamaica visitors should bring the following items:

- ❒ proof of citizenship
- ❒ airline tickets
- ❒ snorkel, fins and mask
- ❒ sunscreen
- ❒ aloe vera gel

- ❒ first aid kit
- ❒ cameras, flash and film
- ❒ cooler
- ❒ drivers license
- ❒ swimsuit (we usually take two each)
- ❒ all prescriptions (in prescription bottles)
- ❒ mini-address book

■ For Divers

- ❒ C card
- ❒ Compass
- ❒ Dive tables
- ❒ Dive computer
- ❒ Weight belt
- ❒ Mesh bag
- ❒ Dive boots
- ❒ Dive skin or light wetsuit
- ❒ Dive light and Cylume sticks
- ❒ Batteries
- ❒ Logbook
- ❒ Emergency medical information
- ❒ Proof of insurance/ DAN membership card

■ For Boaters & Anglers

- ❒ Non-skid shoes
- ❒ Camera (to record your catch!)

■ For Hikers

- ❒ Hiking shoes (broken-in)
- ❒ Extra socks
- ❒ Compass
- ❒ Insect repellent

■ For Birders

- ❒ Binoculars
- ❒ Bird list
- ❒ Copy of *A Field Guide to Birds of the West Indies* or your favorite birding guide

Adventures on Foot

■ Hiking

Looking for a hiking adventure? You're in the right place. Jamaica has a full range of hikes, from rainforest jaunts to valley hikes to mountain climbs.

■ Prices

Prices for guided hikes vary greatly, but expect short tours to begin at about US $30.

Recommended Operators

SAFARI TOURS
Ocho Rios
☎ 876-795-0482
Safari@cwjamaica.com
SafariTours offers a group hiking trip that begins in the pre-dawn hours. The Blue Mountain Tour takes trekkers (experienced hikers only should opt for this trip) for a lung-expanding hike to see sunrise from the peaks. They also conduct driving tours. The Blue Mountain tour is priced at $290 and includes meals and an overnight stay in cabins.

VALLEY HIKES
Port Antonio
☎ 876-993-3881, or Hotel Mockingbird Hill at ☎ 876-993-7133.
These hikes go into the John Crow Mountains with instruction along the way about endemic plants, use of local herbs and plants, and other interesting tidbits. This well-respected operator works with the Portland Environmental Protection Association, the first non-governmental environmental group in Jamaica. PEPA operates PEP clubs for youths in the Portland Parish.

TOURING SOCIETY OF JAMAICA
Strawberry Hill
☎ 876-975-7158 or 876-944-8400
lyndalee@islandoutpost.com
This company is known for its hiking trips and cultural excursions. Tours include walks along some of the Blue Mountains' most popular trails, as well as some of the less-used routes.

■ Caving

Thanks to the limestone that makes up much of Jamaica, the island has over 1,100 caves. Some, such as the Nonsuch Cave near Port Antonio, offer guided tours, but for the most part the caves are for real adventure travelers who want to explore independently.

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *You should hire an experienced local guide for cave exploration (for more on that, see the interview below), and also let your hotel know where you are going and when you expect to return.*

One of the top experts on the subject of Jamaica's caves is spelunker Alan G. Fincham, author of *Jamaica Underground*, published by the University of the West Indies Press. The book is available through select booksellers – University Bookstore on the UWI Campus, Speleo Books (www.speleobooks.com), Amazon.com (UK) and Barnes & Noble in the UK. The author maintains a small stock (soft cover and library quality), which can be supplied to US/Canada-based cavers. These copies are signed by the author. Check out the author's website, The Jamaica Caves Page, at http://cwis.usc.edu/hsc/dental/ccmb/Jamaica.html. It suggests how to obtain the book as well as photos and general information on the island's vast cave system.

■ ADVENTURE TALKS
Interview with Alan Fincham, Spelunker

Q. What types of caving experiences can visitors expect?

A. Jamaica offers a very wide range of caves, providing interest for cavers of every level of experience from the casual "tourist" caver to the "hard-core" experienced. There are several show caves open to visitors, such as Nonsuch Caves in Portland, the Runaway Bay Caves in St. Ann and the Roaring River Cave in Westmoreland. They are operated commercially and really require no previous caving experience. Then there are a few caves which can be visited with the help of local guides (who will ask for a negotiable fee!). A prime example of this is Windsor Great Cave in Trelawny, a must for those truly interested in caves. Beyond these there are numerous smaller caves. You should be guided to these by locals (but be warned that demands for compensation may verge on the outrageous!). For the experienced caver there are many, many gems. Here is my suggested short list: Quashies River Cave, Trelawny; Rock Spring Caverns, St. Mary; Jackson's Bay Cave, Clarendon; St. Clair Cave, St. Catherine; Crofts River Cave, St. Catherine; Gourie Cave, Manchester; Printed Circuit and Mouth River Caves,

Trelawny; Bristol Cave, Trelawny; Thatchfield Great Cave; St. Ann.

Q. Do you have a favorite cave you would recommend for travelers without caving experience?

A. Windsor Cave. Try to get secure the services of a guide who knows the area intimately. If possible, locate Mr. Brady Campbell (ask around). Always wear sturdy, non-slip shoes, the cave can be very slippery in places. This is a huge cave with many interesting speleothems and a large colony of bats.

Q. Which "hidden treasures" would you recommend to more dedicated and experienced cavers?

A. If you are equipped (and experienced) for vertical caves, Quashies River is undoubtedly a gem, with an active river passage and waterfalls. Watch the weather carefully and remember there is no rescue organization! For a non-vertical cave, the main Jackson's Bay Cave should not be missed. A guide may be needed here both for surface and underground route finding.

Q. How can spelunkers find guides? Are these guides especially important to keep travelers from accidentally wandering into ganja *fields or other dangerous situations?*

A. Finding a reliable guide can be difficult. Many locals will profess to be able to take you to caves, but often they do not really know the places. Yes, without care one can get into difficult situations, especially *ganja* fields. Also, you might run into hostile locals who demand massive payments for being on their land.

Q. Should arrangements for guides be made before leaving home?

A. This can be difficult. For experienced cavers, making contact with the Jamaica Caving Club (c/o Dept. of Geology, University of the West Indies, ☎ 876-927-1660) is a good plan. However, the club currently appears to be only fragmentary and getting in touch can be difficult. (Fincham may be able to assist in some cases; contact him through his website at http://cwis.usc.edu/hsc/dental/ccmb/Jamaica.html).

Although I say it myself, *Jamaica Underground* is "definitive" and is a must for serious cavers. The information in the book took over 15 years to assemble, and much of the material is not available elsewhere.

■ Golf

Golfing options in Jamaica can fill a book of their own. The island is home to several top-notch, well-respected courses that are both challenging and beautiful. Caddies are required on all courses.

Courses

The top courses are found near Montego Bay, although Ocho Rios, Negril, Kingston and Mandeveille also offer courses.

HALF MOON GOLF, TENNIS AND BEACH CLUB
Montego Bay
☎ 876-953-2560, fax 876-953-8089, www.halfmoon-resort.com
This course was designed by Robert Trent Jones and is the home of the Red Stripe Pro Am. Facilities include a clubhouse, restaurant, bar and pro shop. The course's greens fees run US $85 for guests and US $130 for non-guests. Par 72, 7,119 yards.

IRONSHORE
Montego Bay
☎ 876-953-2800
Ironshore is three miles east of the airport in a villa resort. The 18-hole links-style course was designed by Robert Moote. Facilities include a restaurant, pro shop and bar. The greens fee is US $50. Par 72, 6,633 yards.

TRYALL GOLF, TENNIS AND BEACH CLUB
Montego Bay
☎ 876-956-5681, toll free 800-238-5290
Fifteen miles west of Montego Bay at the luxurious Tryall resort, this course is Jamaica's best-known, and is considered one of the world's best. It is set on the site of a former sugar plantation. Don't miss the water wheel (it's right on the road), which is a must for photographers. The 18-hole golf course was designed by Ralph Plummer and hosts the LPGA's Jamaica Classic and the Johnnie Walker World Championship. Greens fees are US $80 for guests, $115 for non-guests. Facilities include a clubhouse, beach bar, restaurant and a pro shop. Par 70; 6,221 yards.

WYNDHAM ROSE HALL
Montego Bay
☎ 876-953-2650, www.wyndham.com
Located four miles east of the airport just across the North Coast Highway from the Wyndham Rose Hall resort, the Wyndham Rose Hall Country Club course was designed by Henry O. Smedly and is said to be one of the most difficult in the world. The 8th hole, nicknamed "Chinaman's Reef," hugs the coastline and is near trees. Facilities include a clubhouse,

Scuba Diving

The waters off Port Antonio are quieter than those of Ocho Rios or Montego Bay. Wall diving is especially popular here. Contact ***Lady G'diver*** (☎ 876-993-9888).

Dive sites near Port Antonio include:

- **Alligator Head.** This 50-160-foot site is for intermediate and advanced divers and is known for its sea fans, sponges and tubes.
- **Alligator West.** A good choice for beginners, this area has calmer waters. Look for coral formations and plenty of colorful fish.
- **Bluehole.** Another beginner's dive. Located near the Blue Lagoon. Watch for rays in these beautiful waters.
- **Fairy Hill.** This 50-120-foot dive features a pinnacle covered with corals.
- **Trident Wall.** Best for intermediate and advanced divers, this wall dive showcases black coral, sponges and more.

■ Eco-Travel

Birding

Jamaican owl

Whether you go out on your own or with a guide, you will see an impressive number of birds in and around Port Antonio. Hotel Mocking Bird provided us with this list of species that have been sighted on their property: ring-tailed pigeon (endangered), Jamaican parakeet, chestnut-bellied cuckoo, Jamaican owl, Jamaican mango, black-billed streamertail (endangered), Jamaican tody, Jamaican woodpecker, sad flycatcher, rufous-tailed flycatcher, Jamaican becard, Jamaican crow, white-chinned thrush, Jamaican euphonia, Jamaican stripe-headed tanager, orangequit, Jamaican oriole, Jamaican elenia, northern patoo, bananaquit, Caribbean dove, common ground dove, vervain hummingbird, loggerhead kingbird, greater Antillean bullfinch, greater Antillean grackle, northern mockingbird, greenrumped parrotlet, worm-eating warbler, ruddy quail dove, ovenbird, prairie warbler, grey king bird, Cape May warbler (migrant), white-crowned pigeon, stolid flycatcher,

Bananaquit

northern parula warbler, black and white warbler (migrant), American redstart, blackpoll warbler, black-throated green warbler, mourning warbler (migrant), turkey vulture, black-throated blue warbler.

■ Working to Make a Difference

Port Antonio's Hotel Mocking Bird Hill is one of the most respected ecotourism properties in the entire Caribbean. Here is the mission statement by Shireen Aga and Barbara Walker, managers of this eco-friendly property:

Tourism is a desirable activity of economic benefit to the nation and local communities, and of personal benefit to the individual. Excessive and insensitive tourism development can threaten the quality of both the environment and of the tourist experience.

We believe that every enterprise has an obligation to protect the environment and to offer something of tangible benefit to the community. Business must add value to the economy and the society.

Hotel Mocking Bird Hill is committed to the highest level of environmental management that is incorporated into every aspect of its operations. We take a holistic view of our business and are guided by the following principles of sustainability.

ENJOYMENT. The promotion of tourist enjoyment of the countryside should primarily be aimed at those activities which draw on the character of the countryside itself, its beauty, culture, history, flora and fauna. Hotel Mocking Bird Hill actively supports the care and conservation of the Portland area and encourages visitors to enjoy the natural beauty of the area in an environmentally friendly manner.

RURAL ECONOMY. Development should support the rural economy and seek a wider spread to ensure benefits for the host community. Hotel Mocking Bird Hill favors homegrown produce and uses only local, seasonal produce and seeks to provide secure, stable and meaningful employment for people of our community.

CONSERVATION. Those who benefit from tourism should contribute to the conservation and enhancement of its most valuable asset – the countryside – through political and practical support for conservation. Hotel Mocking Bird Hill is preserving its natural surroundings in order to maintain the habitat of native flora and fauna. Wherever possible we will try and improve conditions by terracing and composting and planting of new trees.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT. We provide excellent service and a good quality product without compromising the comfort of the guests, while being mindful not to waste our natural resources such as water and energy for the sake of providing luxury. We seek

to reduce consumption of energy and natural resources and strive to use the most energy-efficient systems of operation. We endeavor to reduce the use of non-renewable resources, while actively using alternative renewable sources.

WASTE MANAGEMENT. We promote an active policy of waste avoidance as far as possible. We minimize, re-use and recycle waste wherever possible and dispose of all other waste through safe and responsible methods.

BUYING POLICIES. We use natural, close-to-source products wherever possible and do not use ingredients that are scarce. We do not buy individually packaged, single use, disposal items.

RISK REDUCTION. We seek to minimize the risk of damage to the environment and to the health and safety of our staff and customers by using environmentally friendly products and safe procedures. No pesticides, insecticides or harmful chemicals are used.

COMMUNICATION. At Hotel Mocking Bird Hill we foster good communications with the local community in order to be a good neighbor and will continue to encourage regular interaction with environmental organizations. We also promote visitor awareness and considerate behavior.

MARKETING. Publicity, information and marketing initiatives of Hotel Mocking Bird Hill endeavor to develop people's understanding of and concern for the country and the people.

EDUCATION. The hotel is used as an arena for raising the awareness of staff, suppliers and guests on a wide range of crucial environmental and social issues. We strive to increase understanding of the inter-dependency between tourism and our environment and encourage people to be responsible and accountable for their actions. We desire to change consumers to customers through education.

ASSESSMENT OF OPERATIONS. The management of Hotel Mocking Bird Hill will assume responsibility for the environmental impact of its operations. In addition to complying with the applicable laws and regulations, we will undergo periodic internal assessments, which will help us not only to monitor our operations but also identify areas for further improvement. We believe in ethical business practices and see our enterprise as a force for social change.

Eco-Parks & Natural Delights

CRYSTAL SPRINGS RESORT
Buff Bay (1 hour from Port Antonio)
☎ 876-996-1400
Hours: daily
Admission charged

This eco-park is an adventure traveler's delight. Here, among 158 acres, you'll find over 15,000 varieties of plants, one of the largest orchid collections in the Caribbean and bird watching tours. Accommodations are also offered (see *Where to Stay*).

NONSUCH CAVES AND ATHENRY GARDENS
East of Port Antonio (first right after Dragon Bay)
☎ 876-993-3740
Hours: 10 am-4:30 pm daily
Admission charged

The three-acre Athenry Gardens are home to the Nonsuch Caves, filled with stalactites and stalagmites. The caves can be seen on a guided walk along well-lit passageways. The gardens are especially nice, with many local species accompanied by mountain views.

REACH FALLS
East of Port Antonio off A4
Hours: daily during daylight hours
Admission charged

These falls are well known for their starring role in *Cocktail* (Tom Cruise's character comes here for a little aquatic hanky-panky). A beautiful setting. Take a dip in the clear waters here.

SOMERSET FALLS
A4 west to Hope Bay
☎ 876-926-0989 or 913-0108
Hours: daily 10-5
Admission charged

These beautiful falls on the Daniel's River are surrounded by rain forest. Be sure to wear your bathing suit – you wouldn't want to miss the chance to take a dip here. Take a ride on the gondola for a spectacular view, then stroll around the gardens.

■ Cultural Excursions

Moore Town

Nanny

This hometown of the Windward Maroons is 11 miles south of Port Antonio and was the home of Nanny, a national heroine. The Colonel, the leader of the Maroons, also lives here and you will probably have the opportunity to meet him during your visit. You are welcome to walk around the town. Be sure to see Bump Grave in the town square, the town's best-known site and burial place of national heroine Nanny. The tomb of Nanny is decorated with flags.

Shopping

Port Antonio has one notable shopping center, called the **Village of St. George**. Located on West Street, the building was designed using architecture from around the world to represent the many cultures that built Jamaica. This center is a good place for souvenirs, unique gifts and some food items.

Where to Stay

■ Villas, Resorts & Hotels

BLUE LAGOON VILLAS
Fairy Hill
☎ 876-993-8491, fax 876-993-8492; reservations ☎ 800-237-3237
www.bluelagoonvillas.com, reservations@bluelagoonvillas.com
$$$$

This is one of the most photographed accommodations in eastern Jamaica. One- to four-bedroom villas are perched right on the water's edge, offering exquisite luxury and privacy. Each includes indoor and outdoor dining, a full kitchen and sun decks. They come with daily housekeeping and meals are served by the resident maid-chef and butler. The villas are within swimming distance of the Blue Lagoon and Pelou Island, once owned by Princess Nina Aga Khan.

CRYSTAL SPRINGS RESORT
Buff Bay (1 hour from Port Antonio)
☎ 876-996-1400
$
This eco-park offers camping as well as rustic cottages. There are acres of forest, fruit trees and a good collection of orchids. A good spot for birding.

HOTEL PRICES	
Rates per room based on double occupancy. Prices in all-inclusive properties are per person.	
$	Under US$50
$$	US$50-$100
$$$	US$101-$175
$$$$	Over US$175

DEMONTEVIN LODGE HOTEL
21 Fort George Street, Titchfield Hill
☎ 876-993-2604
$
This classic inn has 13 guest rooms. Like a quaint Victorian inn, the hotel has a homey feel and is best for bargain travelers. The home was once a private house, and is decorated with attractive ironwork.

DRAGON BAY BEACH RESORT
Point Ann
☎ 876-993-8751, fax 876-993-8971; reservations ☎ 800-633-3284
$$$
These 30 villas are perched on a private lagoon. Choose from one, two or three bedrooms, each surrounded by beautiful gardens and all the comforts of home. The hotel's grounds are an attraction in themselves; you very well might spot hummingbirds and butterflies on your strolls.

INTERESTING FACT: *If you recognize these 55 acres, it's with good reason: they have been the backdrop for movies including* Cocktail, Lord of the Flies *and* Club Paradise. *Don't miss the "Cruise Bar" – the beach bar where Tom Cruise's character mixed drinks (and won hearts) in Cocktail.*

FERN HILL CLUB
Drapers
☎ 876-993-9531, fax ☎ 876-993-7373
www.fernhillclubhotel.com, info@fernhillclubhotel.com
$$
This 30-room hillside inn perched at the foothills of the Blue Mountains has air conditioning, four pools, satellite TV, tennis and many other free amenities, including windsurfing, Sunfish sailing and snorkeling. There's even a Spa Suite with in-room facilities.

GOBLIN HILL VILLAS AT SAN SAN
Drapers
☎ 876-925-8108, fax 876-925-6248; reservations ☎ 800-472-1148
www.goblinhill.com, goblinhill@N5.com.jm
$$$$
Goblin Hill overlooks San San Bay, Port Antonio's beautiful harbor, and offers its guests peace and quiet. The 28 villas include the services of a housekeeper-cook, who will cook and serve your favorite dishes. The villas are a short walk away from the water.

HOTEL MOCKING BIRD HILL
Point Ann
☎ 876-993-7267, fax 876-993-7133
www.hotelmockingbirdhill.com, mocklord@cwjamaica.com
$$-$$$
This 10-room hotel is often cited for its eco-friendly policies. It uses solar energy and locally produced furniture and the grounds feature local plantings. Even the restaurant, the excellent Mille Fleurs, uses local produce. This property is very popular with ecotourists and offers many tours that explore the natural attractions of the Port Antonio area.

■ ADVENTURE TALKS
Interview with Hotel Mocking Bird Hill

We recently interviewed managers Shireen Aga and Barbara Walker about the unique property.

Q. How would you describe Hotel Mocking Bird Hill's environmental approach? What is the hotel's mission?

The hotel is situated in an area that is an ideal base for many activities. Experiences can range from birdwatching, butterfly watching, hiking, biking down the Blue Mountains, visiting plantations and community projects. We can also arrange meetings with specialists in a particular field of interest, such as naturopathy, the Rastafarian religion or the role of women in Jamaican society. Many people are interested in socio-cultural aspects and we connect them with our neighbors and other members of the community. There is a Maroon community here in Moore Town, the holdout of the Maroons during their civil war with the British in their fight for independence. One can visit the Colonel (head of the community) there and learn about Maroon history and hear tales of Nanny, who led them triumphantly to victory against the British.

The management is involved in various community projects and has a partnership with a school. Guests interested in contributing, visiting and sharing their skills are welcomed. To this extent the

hotel sends out information about the E.N.O.U.G.H. program that they have initiated (see following page for full details).

Q. What awaits adventure travelers at Hotel Mockingbird Hill and Port Antonio? What types of eco-tourism and eco-cultural experiences are available for your guests?

A. Jamaica is home to over 800 species of plants found nowhere else on earth and to 220 birds, of which 25 are endemic, the largest number of any Caribbean island.The guests can see approximately 40 different types of birds right on property, of which two are on the international endangered list and two on the rare list. See list of birds sighted at Hotel Mocking Bird Hill (page 191).

Also, the best preserved reefs with the most marine life in Jamaica are here. There are many opportunities for snorkeling and one diving station. This area is home to a diversity of sea life that makes learning to dive well worthwhile. One of the few areas in Jamaica where one can sight the endangered manatee is the bay at the bottom of the hill where the hotel is located, namely Turtle Crawl Bay.

Q. Can you tell us more about your role with the Portland Environment Protection Association?

A. One of the managers was a Director for two years. She conducted training for hotel staff about environmentally friendly operations. The other manager is now part of a committee/ delegation that is conducting dialogue with the Parish council to enforce improvements in many areas. The hotel is a member of the association and one of the managers was co-author of a handbook published by the hotel association on environmentally friendly practices in hotels. We are members of the Hotel Association's Environmental Committee and participating in another committee that is being established to determine environmental standards for tourism in Jamaica.

It was the work of the managers in conjunction with the Ministry for Tourism and other related bodies that organized a major environmental seminar in Portland two years ago. As a result, a Green Committee for Jamaica was established.

Finally, the hotel was one of the first four hotels worldwide to be certified as a "Green Globe" hotel. USAID has funded a project to audit other properties and provide consultancy services to help prepare themselves for the certification process. The hotel was also recognized as the most environmentally friendly small hotel in the Caribbean by the CHA (Caribbean Hotel Association) as well as the most environmentally friendly business in Jamaica by the Trafalgar Development Bank.

Q. Describe the experience that awaits travelers who get off the beaten path and enjoy unique properties such as Hotel Mocking Bird Hill?

A. A vacation at Hotel Mocking Bird Hill is more than just a holiday relaxing at some beach and enjoying cocktails by the pool. By all means, these can be enjoyed here as well, but the options offered to combine volunteer vacation and adventure holiday is far more rewarding. Actually helping with some projects, performing community services, assisting directly, hands-on, is more rewarding than just signing a check to an environmental organization. Adventure vacations can make traveling a memorable experience, not only for the excitement of discovery against a tropical background, but for the positive emotional landscape as well. Guests leave with a new sense of vision. It is the intangibles gained – such as cultural appreciation and overall personal growth – that are unique.

In terms of the location, Hotel Mocking Bird Hill offers the best of both worlds. It sits up in the foothills overlooking the Blue Mountains, the Caribbean Sea and the harbor of Port Antonio and guests can enjoy the wonderful panoramic vistas and the cool breezes while having access to one of Jamaica's most famous beaches, Frenchman's Cove, which is just a five-minute drive down the hill. The hotel provides a free shuttle service.

Also, Barbara Walker, one of the managers, is an artist. An art gallery has been built on-site, where the guests can view the works of various local artists, including Barbara's. In addition, they can take lessons under the guidance of Barbara Walker. It's a wonderful experience to take a rough piece of stone or wood and see a new shape emerge. Charcoal and pastel drawing are the other media in which she can instruct new aspiring artists.

■ E.N.O.U.G.H.

"The objective of the E.N.O.U.G.H. program is to galvanize support for better quality education in Port Antonio's schools. Poor education currently puts a large number of our community members at a disadvantage and makes it almost impossible for them to achieve a higher quality of life.

It is not our intention to take over the job of educating, but to support those who are trained to do so by providing books and learning material through the program. We want to cooperate with schools and facilitate experiences that will enhance and complement the basic framework of the curriculum by inviting classes to Gallery Carriacou. Barbara Walker has committed herself to introducing children to art.

In addition to financial contributions towards this goal, the donation of any books or other educational toys or learning materials, be they used or new, will be most appreciated. Please gather any items from your friends and family before you come to Jamaica on holiday and bring whatever you can."

To assist the E.N.O.U.G.H. Program, send money or materials to Hotel Mocking Bird Hill, ☎ 876-993-7134 or 876-993-7267, fax 876-993-7133; mockbrd@cwjamaica.com, www.hotelmockingbirdhill.com.

JAMAICA CREST RESORT
Fairy Hill
☎ 876-993-8400, fax 876-933-8432
$$-$$$

This 14-apartment complex has air-conditioned accommodations, two restaurants, tennis, pool, a disco, gift shop and even a massage and beauty salon. There are one- and two-bedroom villas as well as studio units, each with kitchenette, TV, phone and ceiling fans.

JAMAICA PALACE
Drapers
☎ 876-993-7720, reservations ☎ 800-423-4095, fax 876-993-7759
www.jamaicapalace.com, pal.hotel@cwjamaica.com
$$

Jamaica Palace is probably the most unusual property in Port Antonio, built like a 17th-century Italian palace. The black and white floor tiles that surround the exterior echo the black lacquered furniture inside. All rooms are furnished with Middle Eastern decor (Persian rugs and unusual antiques fill the property). The hotel's pool is built in the shape of Jamaica.

TRIDENT VILLAS AND HOTEL
Point Ann
☎ 876-993-2602, reservations ☎ 800-428-4734
www.tridentvillas.com
$$$$ (all-inclusive optional)

This longtime favorite of the well-heeled crowd is one of Port Antonio's top resorts. The atmosphere is super-quiet (when we had lunch here we were the only diners, and were accompanied by a few elegant peacocks that strolled through the open-air restaurant).

AUTHORS' TIP: *Look around for familiar celebrity faces. This resort has long drawn stars, and recently was used as a setting for the movie* Shattered Image.

Guest rooms are elegant and private; dining here is white-gloved and equally cultivated. There is a small beach area, but most of the property is bordered by rugged rocks which are pounded by the sea night and day – truly a stunning sight. It is well worth coming out just for a look around the property and a meal.

Where to Eat

■ Continental Cuisine

MILLE FLEURS
Hotel Mocking Bird Hill
☎ 876-993-7267, fax 876-993-7133
$$$-$$$$

This restaurant overlooking Port Antonio and the Caribbean Sea is a romantic favorite. Sit on the terrace surrounded by tropical vegetation and enjoy the sunset (manager Shireen Aga recommends that guests arrive by 6 pm to enjoy cocktails and a sunset view). The restaurant offers an à la carte menu that changes daily. Lunch is served from noon to 2 pm; dinner is served starting at 7 pm, with the last order taken at 9:30.

DINING PRICES	
Price per person for a meal, with drink and gratuity.	
$	Under US$15
$$	US$15-$30
$$$	US$31-$45
$$$$	Over US$45

Some of the interesting entrées served here include chicken in June plum sauce; grilled fish with spicy mango-shrimp sauce; and spiced fish with tamarind and coconut sauce.

Hotel Mocking Bird Hill is involved with the E.N.O.U.G.H. (Education Needs Our Urgent Generous Help) program, a unique project aimed at assisting Port Antonio's schools. If you'd like to participate, the program welcomes the help of visitors. We asked managers Shireen Aga and Barbara Walker for more information about this program.

TRIDENT VILLAS AND HOTEL
Point Ann
☎ 876-993-2602
$$$$

This elegant eatery is the fanciest in Port Antonio. Dine by candlelight on either continental or Jamaican fare. Open daily for dinner. Most eve-

nings, dinner consist of six courses and is served by white-gloved waitstaff.

■ Ice Cream

DEVON HOUSE'S I SCREAM
West Street
$
The ever-popular Kingston ice cream parlor also has a location in tiny Port Antonio (a clue to the popularity of this seaside getaway with Kingstonians). Cool off with a scoop of one of the many tropical flavors.

■ Jamaican Restaurants

TRIDENT VILLAS AND HOTEL
Point Ann
☎ 876-993-2602
$$$$
See listing above.

BLUE LAGOON
Fairy Hill
☎ 876-993-8491
$$
This casual eatery sits alongside the lagoon's edge and serves authentic Jamaican dishes. Choose from jerk chicken or sausage, vegetarian pizza, fresh lobster and more. Live entertainment keeps the place hopping on weekends. Open daily for lunch and dinner.

LOW BRIDGE PLACE RESTAURANT & BAR
Drapers, 4 miles east of Port Antonio, near San San
☎ 876-993-7888
$
Owned by a Jamaican couple, this relaxed eatery serves local treats such as ackee and saltfish, escovitch fish, pumpkin rice, and rice and peas. The bar offers plenty of local specialties too, from fresh fruit punch to Red Stripe beer.

■ ■ ■

Negril
Introduction

Every Thursday afternoon, maids deliver white sheets to guest rooms at Hedonism II in Negril. But these sheets are not for the beds. They're for the guests to wear to dinner that night.

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- Getting Around 204
- Sightseeing 211
- Adventures 212
- Shopping 216
- Where to Stay 217
- Where to Eat 228
- Nightlife 233

"No sheet, no eat" is the motto of the weekly toga party at this resort known for its adults-only atmosphere. Hedonism II attracts fun-loving couples and singles over age 18 who come to this westernmost point of Jamaica for a vacation of sun, sand and something more. Guests leave their inhibitions behind, seeking pleasure in the form of festivities like Toga Night, buffets to tempt the most devoted calorie counters, bars open until 5 am, and nonstop adult fun.

On Toga Night, some people sport traditional modest Roman wraps, but variations abound, most revealing plenty of sunburned skin. Don't be surprised to see women lining up at the buffet wearing topless micro-togas or men leaning against the bar wearing the kind of getups rarely seen outside a sumo wrestling ring. Hedonism's credo is that "a vacation should be whatever you want it to be," and for some that means a break from the cares and even the clothes of the everyday world.

Although some form of dress is required in the dining rooms (no need to worry about packing a dinner jacket for this resort), many guests wear only suntan oil and shades on the beach. The wide, white sand beach has room for everyone though, whether prude or nude. Half is "formal," with swimsuit required. The rest of the beach is reserved for those seeking the total tan. The nude beach also includes its own pool and hot tub, bar and grill cabanas and even volleyball and shuffleboard courts. With its emphasis on unlimited pleasures, you might expect guests at Hedonism to be primarily college-aged. However, the average age here is 42. Over one-third of the guests are returnees, coming back year after year to partake of the food, fun and fantasy.

It's in the after-dark hours when the hedonists really get busy. Following the night's beach party, reggae dance or pajama party, guests head to a disco that flashes with a $500,000 lighting system or to the nude hot tub for late-night revelry. Others hang out at the bars, open until just before the Caribbean sun peaks over the horizon at 5 am.

Even members of the rock-til-you-drop crowd eventually head back to their rooms, which at Hedonism are comfortable but not luxurious. In

keeping with the adult atmosphere, there is one special feature in the rooms: mirrored ceilings above every bed.

The adventure that Hedonism provides is not a typical Negril adventure (or typical for anywhere in the world outside the Hedonism gates!), but it does exemplify the freedom that Negril affords travelers. Since its early days as a haven for hippies in the 1970s, the city has long harbored an image as a wild vacation destination. Nudity is common on the beaches of Bloody Bay. Reggae clubs bring some of the island's best music to the cliffs that overlook spectacular sunsets. And, while not as popular as it was during the 70s, more than one establishment still sells hallucinogenic teas and vendors still hawk ganja.

The real wildness in Negril lies just outside the city limits. Here, in an area known as the **Great Morass**, you can see a side of the country that most visitors never glimpse. Crocodiles, not vacationers, lie in the steamy afternoon sunshine. Peddlers sell, not marijuana, but shrimp caught using techniques over 400 years old. And spectacular birds, not parasailers, fill the air with dashes of color and a cacophony of exotic sounds.

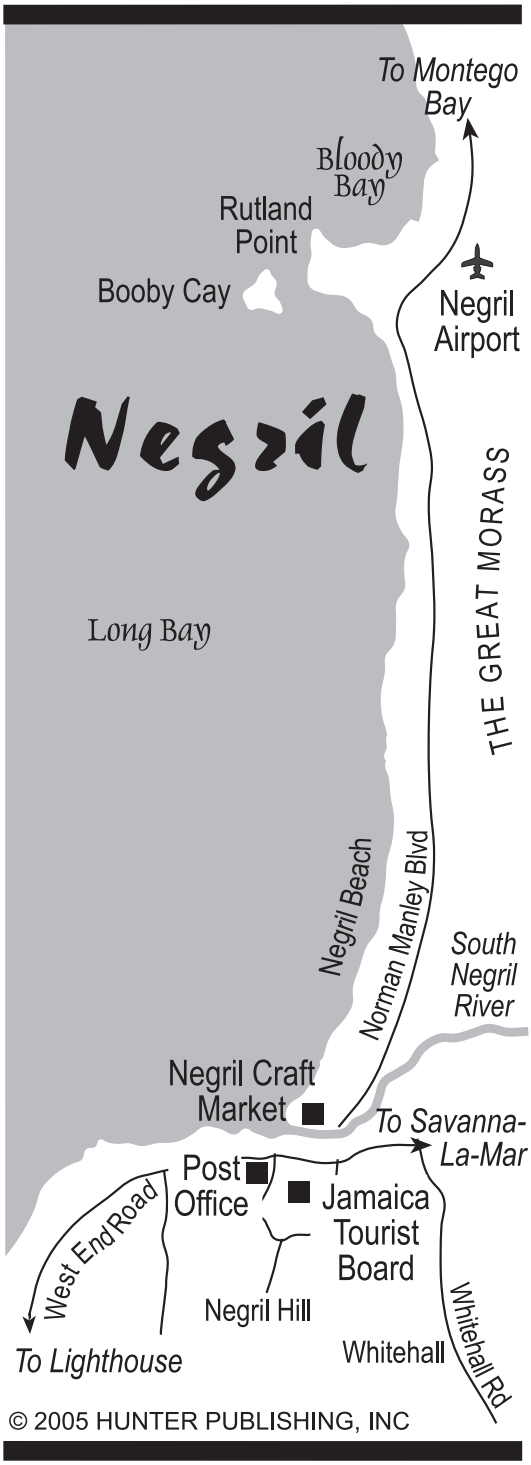
Today, Negril has gained respectability and is home to all types of resorts that attract everyone from swingers to families. Law mandates that no building here can be taller than a palm tree so low-rises follow the coast from **Bloody Bay** (named for the days when the whalers cleaned their catch here) to the cliffs at its southern end, where the **Negril Lighthouse** still signals the rocks to ships.

Negril is best known for its seven miles of beach, home to the largest share of accommodations and plenty of small restaurants. Travelers staying along this stretch can walk the beach from property to property.

INTERESTING FACT: ***Booby Cay*** *on the north end of Negril doubled as the South Sea for Disney's* Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea *movie.*

Getting Around

Once you arrive in Negril, getting around is fairly easy, whether you choose to drive yourself or rely on the plentiful taxi service.


To Montego Bay
Bloody Bay
Rutland Point
Booby Cay
Negril Airport
Negril
Long Bay
THE GREAT MORASS
Negril Beach
Norman Manley Blvd
South Negril River
Negril Craft Market
To Savanna-La-Mar
Post Office
Jamaica Tourist Board
West End Road
Negril Hill
Whitehall
Whitehall Rd
To Lighthouse
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On the north edge, entering from Montego Bay, the resorts begin at **Bloody Bay**, location of Grand Lido Negril, Hedonism II and Sandals Negril. This stretch of beach is across the street from the Negril airport, behind which lies a giant swamp called the **Great Morass**. Continuing south, Bloody Bay gives way to **Long Bay**, home of the seven-mile-long **Negril Beach**. Along this stretch lie both big name resorts such as Beaches Negril and Poinciana Beach Resort as well as small inns under 50 rooms (and many much smaller). Travelers enjoy walking along the beach for miles and will find many beach bars and restaurants right on the sand. The resorts all sit on **Norman Manley Boulevard**, the main thoroughfare through the area, dividing the beach from the Great Morass.

Heading south, the beach is eventually broken by the intersection of the **South Negril River**, which marks the entrance to downtown Negril. Just north of the river lies the **Negril Crafts Market**, a ramshackle collection of buildings filled with woodcarvings, paintings and handmade jewelry, all representing the spirit of Negril. South of the market lies the roundabout and Norman Manley Boulevard becomes **West End Road**.

To the east, **Sheffield Road** turns toward **Savanna-La- Mar** (known locally as Sav-La-Mar). **West End Road** traces the shoreline, which becomes less sandy and more rocky and eventually gives way to steep cliffs. Along this section are some budget getaways that are favored by young travelers as well as many longtime Negril fans. Many of the small properties are built right out on the cliffs and one even utilizes the sea caves as guest areas (we had a massage inside a sea cave at The Caves). Also here is the **Negril Lighthouse**, which offers the best view of the region.

■ Car Rentals

Read the precautions listed on pages 58-59 before deciding to rent a car for your stay. There are several rental agencies in Negril.

CAR RENTAL AGENCIES	
Dollar Rent-A-Car	☎ 876-957-4110
Paradise Jeep and Car Rental	☎ 876-957-4213
Safari Auto Rental	☎ 876-957-3306

■ Taxis

Taxis are the most popular method of transportation for travelers. They can be found at any hotel, the airports, and most shopping areas. Travelers should be careful to use only licensed taxis; these have a red license plate that indicates the taxi is a Public Passenger Vehicle (PPV). If you need to call a taxi, contact the official carrier: Jamaica Union of Travelers Association or **JUTA** (☎ 876-957-9197 in Negril). Taxi rates vary, but are figured by car, not by passenger. Fares average about US $5-7 for 10 miles. If you accept a driver's offer of his services as a tour guide, be sure to agree on a price before the vehicle is put into gear.

■ Bus Service

This popular mode of transport in Negril can be slow and crowded. The buses are generally not air-conditioned. Buses will stop anywhere along the route to pick up passengers. To catch one, stand by the side of the road with your arm outstretched; pat down with your hand when you see an oncoming bus. Bus fare is about US $1 for 30-40 miles.

■ Bicycle Rentals

WARNING: *Traffic can be hectic on the busier stretches of Norman Manley Boulevard, so ride with care.*

Many of the larger properties have bicycles available for guest use; if yours doesn't, call one of these outfitters.

BICYCLE RENTAL AGENCIES	
Dependable Bike Rental	☎ 876-957-4764
Gas Bike Rental	☎ 876-957-4835
Jah Bs Bike Rental	☎ 876-957-4235
Jolly's Bike Rental	☎ 876-957-3385
Nortigo Bike Rental	☎ 876-957-4627
Pedro Bike Rental	☎ 876-957-4757
Reids Bike Rental	☎ 876-957-4369
Tike's Bike Rental	☎ 876-957-0388
Wright's Bike Rental	☎ 876-957-4908

■ Guided Tours

ACCOMPONG MAROON TOUR
☎ 876-952-4546
Hours: Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday

Also available from Montego Bay, this tour offers a look at Accompong, the village occupied by the Maroons. The Maroons were escaped slaves who headed for the hills in the 17th century and were never recaptured. Today the Maroons live as their own society, separate from Jamaican law, with their own elected officials and rules in a remote region of Jamaica known as Cockpit Country.

The capital of the region is the community of Accompong. The tour makes a visit in this unique town for a look at its historic buildings and residents, who are considered the greatest herbalists in Jamaica. The tour takes a look at the community and offers visitors the opportunity to meet with a bush doctor who uses traditional herbal medicines and to enjoy a performance by Maroon singers and dancers.

APPLETON ESTATE RUM TOUR
Jamaica Estate Tours
☎ 876-963-9215, fax 876-963-9218
http://jamaica-southcoast.com/appleton, appleton@infochan.com
(or check with your hotel's tour desk)
Hours: 9-3:30 daily, except Sundays
Admission charged

See *Sightseeing* for details about tours of this estate.

BLACK RIVER SAFARI CRUISE
Black River
☎ 876-965-2513
Open daily

The tour to Black River is a popular one from Negril, especially for travelers who are staying for an entire week in the beach community. It gives you a good chance to get out and see the undeveloped areas of Jamaica, such as the wilderness along the Black River, still home to crocodiles as well as many bird species. For more on Black River, see the South Coast chapter, pages 238-241.

JACANA AQUA TOURS LTD.
Black River
☎ 876-965-2513
Hours: 8:30 am-5 pm daily

Another tour to Black River, this package trip also includes a visit to YS Falls. For more on this tour, see the South Coast chapter, page 243.

SHAFSTON TOURS
Bluefields
☎ 876-869-9212
www.shafston.com, mail@shafston.com

These guided tours give travelers a real taste of Jamaica with hikes, historic site visits, fishing and more. Here's a rundown of the Shafston offerings:

- **Mayfield Falls.** A one-hour drive through the sugarcane fields leads to these remote falls. Bring along a swimsuit and

water shoes as well as a camera (the guide will carry it for you). The tour includes lunch.

- **YS Falls, Apple Valley/Appleton, and Bamboo Avenue**. This tour goes through Middle Quarters (be sure to buy some peppered shrimp from the ladies along the roadside) to YS Falls. At Apple Valley, travelers can fish; another option is to visit Appleton Rum Factory (admission price is not included in the tour price). Finally, the trip winds back through Bamboo Avenue to Shafston Great House, finishing the day with a cold jelly coconut.
- **Black River, Lover's Leap, Treasure Beach**. This South Coast tour includes a boat ride up the Black River for a look at crocodiles, a drive to Lover's Leap for a spectacular view, and on to Treasure Beach. Travelers are warned that swimming can be dangerous here because of strong undertow.
- **Negril.** These excursions start at the famous Negril Beach and market. Later, participants can jump off the cliffs on the West End. Be sure to bring beachwear, camera, film and snorkel gear.
- **Savanna-La-Mar, Little Bay, Bob Marley's House.** Visits the market of Savanna-La-Mar and continues to the fishing community of Little Bay, former home of Bob Marley. Here he lived with beauty queen Esther Anderson. Tours take a look at the house (tour price includes house admission).
- **Bamboo Avenue, Alligator Pond, Gut River, Alligator Hole River, Manatees**. This tour is a favorite with nature lovers as it winds through Bamboo Alley to the community of Alligator Pond, a fishing village, then on to Gut River. At Alligator Hole River you can often spot manatees. Bring along bathing suits, cameras and maybe even your snorkel.
- **Horseback Riding**. Ride at Paradise Park, a farm between Bluefields and Savanna-la-Mar, and afterwards go for a swim at a private river park. Bring long pants for the horseback ride and swimming gear. (See also *Adventures on Horseback*, page 215.)
- **Kingston, Blue Mountain, Port Antonio**. This three-day excursion includes a visit to the Bob Marley Museum in Kingston then a drive over the Blue Mountains to Port Antonio for a stay in a local guest house. In Portland, stops in-

clude San San Beach, Frenchman's Cove, Boston Beach and Reach Falls. The tour continues along the North Coast to Dunn's River Falls.

- **Scuba Diving.** With two days advance notice, divers (at least six in the party) can go underwater and explore the area between Bluefields and Little Bay on the South Coast.
- **Deep-Sea Fishing.** Half- and one-day cruises are available from Bluefields Bay. Try your luck for tuna, barracuda, kingfish and marlin.

Go to page 244 for an interview conducted with Frank Lohmann, who runs Shafston Tours.

TOURWISE
Offices at Negril Gardens Hotel
☎ 876-974-2332 or 974-2334

This company offers guided tours of the country's top attractions, including Dunn's River Falls, Black River Safari, rafting, Cockpit Country, Kingston, Mayfield Falls, Blue Lagoon, and more. Tours are available in English, French, Spanish, German, Italian and Dutch.

Sightseeing

APPLETON ESTATE RUM TOUR
Jamaica Estate Tours
☎ 876-963-9215, fax 876-963-9218
http://jamaica-southcoast.com/appleton, appleton@infochan.com
(or check with your hotel's tour desk)
Hours: 9-3:30 daily, except Sundays
Admission charged

It's a beautiful drive from Negril to the Appleton Estate, located on the South Coast. Tours take a look at the distillery and the rum-making process. Visitors enjoy a taste and receive a complimentary sample bottle.

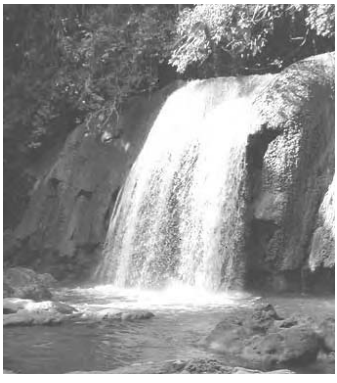
ANANCY FUN PARK
Norman Manley Boulevard
Hours: sunup to sundown
☎ 876-957-5100
Admission, per ride

Anancy Park welcomes families with an 18-hole miniature golf course, go-kart racetrack, carousel and power wheels for the youngest visitors. Families can also take a WaterSkeeter pontoon paddleboat in the small

lake and youngsters can borrow a fishing pole to try their luck in the well-stocked pond.

NEGRIL LIGHTHOUSE
West End Road
Open daily
☎ 876-957-4875
Admission: tip

This 100-foot-high lighthouse is open for tours. Just stop by the caretaker's cottage next door and ask to see it. Bring good walking shoes for the climb; the iron steps are extremely steep. If you've got a problem with heights, skip this stop.



YS FALLS
☎ 876-634-2454, fax 876-965-2076
ysfalls@cwjamaica.com
Open daily
Admission charged

Often part of a guided tour to Black River, YS Falls is well worth a trip of its own. We think these falls are as beautiful as Dunn's River falls, but without the crowds. The pristine spot retains a quiet atmosphere every day of the week. Bring your bathing suit as well as walking shoes.

Adventures

■ Adventures on Foot

Hiking

MAYFIELD FALLS AND MINERAL SPRING
☎ 876-971-6580, fax 876-971-2481
www.mayfieldfalls.com, info@mayfieldfalls.com
Hours: 9-6 daily
Admission charged

A good tour for nature lovers, this visit includes a guided hike up the river with a stop at a bar and grill along the way. You'll then continue via a bamboo bridge across a gorge.

Also see Shafston Tours, pages 209-10, for information about guided excursions to the falls.

Golf

NEGRIL HILLS
On the road to Savannah-La-Mar
☎ 876-957-4638, fax 876-957-3890
www.negrilhillsgolfclub.com, info@negrilhillsgolfclub.com

These rolling greens feature 18 holes, a clubhouse, bar, restaurant, pro shop and tennis. It's not one of the island's top rated courses, but it does have a liquor mobile! Greens fees are $58. Facilities include a clubhouse, restaurant and a pro shop. Par 72; 6,333 yards.

■ Adventures on Wheels

RUSTY'S X-CELLENT ADVENTURES
Negril PO Box 104, Westmoreland
☎ 876-957-0155, fax 876-957-4108
jamtnbikeassc@cwjamaica.com
http://rusty.nyws.com

Rusty's X-Cellent Adventures was established in 1996 by Americans Rusty Jones and Linda Levy and has been featured on national television as well as a long list of bike and travel magazines. This company has all sorts of Negril area bike tours for adventure travelers, whether you're a dedicated biker or still discovering those muscles. The company has used old footpaths (as well as cow and goat paths) to create bike trails through the hills and along the coast. Some trips visit cane fields and rivers, others go to caves. The most adventurous tour takes bikes right off the cliffs on Negril's West End – only for those extreme adventure travelers!

■ Adventures on Water

Beaches

Negril is basically one long, seven-mile beach. This is as good as it gets for real beach devotees. The atmosphere here is still much like it has been for the past 30 years: relaxed, laid back and not too developed. Most of the seven miles of sand have been built upon, but the facilities are small, quaint jerk stands, tiny outdoor eateries, and a few guest houses sprinkled among the hotel properties. There's non-stop action along the beach

and vendors can come up to the high water line, but behind this line visitors can relax in peace.

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *Nude beaches are found at Hedonism II and Grand Lido Negril; both have beach bars and grills.*

Fishing

Several operators offer excursions for deep-sea fishing excursions from Negril.

DEEP-SEA CHARTERS

Best Boat Reef Tour, ☎ 876-995-9709

Blue Whale Divers, ☎ 876-957-4438

Sea Raider, Our Past Time, ☎ 876-957-4224

Wild Thing, Mahogany Inn, ☎ 876-957-4401/2

Also see *Shafston Tours*, pages 209-10, for information about guided excursions to the falls.

> **NOTE:** *For Black River excursions, see Guided Tours, pages 238-41.*

Cliff Diving

On the West End, cliff diving is something of a local sport and a quick way into the clear water. You can dive, jump or fly out on a rope swing at many places along the cliffs. Be sure to watch the locals, who have perfected their jumps. Keep an eye on your children around here.

Scuba Diving

Negril offers some of the best scuba diving on the island. With its protected waters, this area is one of the best in Jamaica for beginning divers. There's a wide variety of dive sites to suit all levels, from coral formations to caves to wrecks. Dive sites include:

- **The Throne Room**. Here you can see through a crack in the reef and view nurse sharks.
- **Sands Club**, a 40-80-foot dive, is filled with all types of tropical fish.
- **Treasure Reef** is known for its large coral heads.

- **Pete Wreck** (a 50-foot tugboat)
- Two wrecked **Cessna planes**.

Operators offer both day and night dives.

DIVE OPERATORS

Blue Whale Divers, ☎ 876-957-4438

Couples Negril, ☎ 876-957-5960

Hedonism II, ☎ 876-957-4200

Marine Life Ventures, ☎ 876-957-4834

Mariner's Dive Centre, ☎ 876-957-0392

Negril Scuba Centre, ☎ 876-957-4425

Sandals Resort, ☎ 876-957-5216

Swept Away, ☎ 876-957-4061

West Point Watersports, ☎ 876-957-5521

Also see *Shafston Tours*, pages 209-10, for information about guided diving trips.

■ Adventures on Horseback

RHODES HALL PLANTATION
Green Island
☎ 876-957-6333 or 6334
Hours: Sunday through Friday
Admission charged

These guided rides travel through banana and coconut groves as well as into the hills and on the beach. Also see *Shafston Tours*, pages 209-10, for information about guided horseback riding excursions.

■ Eco-Travel

ROYAL PALM PRESERVE

Located on the southern side of the Great Morass, this preserve protects the wetlands and the royal palms that thrive here. As of now, there are no trails into the preserve; part of it can be seen from the Negril Golf Club.

■ Cultural Excursions

Historic Sites

BLUEFIELDS

Negril to Savanna-La-Mar to A2

The coastal town of Bluefields was one of the first founded by the Spanish. Henry Morgan – once a pirate, later a governor – sailed from here over three centuries ago.

Bluefields was once home base of naturalist Philip Gosse (see page 103). The grounds here are home to what's said to be Jamaica's oldest breadfruit tree, brought to the island by old Captain Bligh himself.

Bluefields is also home to the Shaftson Great House, which offers great views. From here, Frank Lohmann conducts Shaftson Tours (see pages 209-10, 244).

BELMONT

Belmont, next to Bluefields, is best known as the birthplace of Peter Tosh. The late musician is now buried here in a small building manned by devoted fans. For the price of a tip, you can sign a guest book and visit the memorial. Tosh's tomb lies above ground in the center of the small building, surrounded by photos of him throughout his career.

■ Sports Complex

Negril is home to an excellent sports complex at the Swept Away resort. Tennis (hard court and clay courts), a 25-meter pool, squash, racquetball, and more are available. If you're not a guest at **Swept Away**, ☎ 876-957-4061 to inquire about purchasing a day pass.

Shopping

$ Negril doesn't offer the extensive shopping of the cruise port cities of Mo Bay or Ocho Rios, but foodies will find some good stops. The **Hi-Lo Grocery Store**, on West End Road in the Hi-Lo Shopping Centre, is one of our favorites. Stop by to purchase spices, hot sauces and Blue Mountain coffee at prices far lower than you'll see in the

hotel gift shops. While you're at the shopping mall, walk from shop to shop for a good selection of souvenirs, liquor, local music, cigars and sportswear.

At press time, a new shopping area was opening called **Time Square** on Norman Manley Boulevard. This mall promises to bring the duty-free shopping that's formerly been found only in Mo Bay and along the coast from Ochi to Negril. Look for fine jewelry, watches, designer clothing, perfumes, leather goods and more.

■ Local Crafts

Negril is home to the **Negril Crafts Market**, just off Norman Manley Boulevard as you head south into town. The market isn't much to look at, just a collection of rickety buildings, but the atmosphere is fun and there are some good crafts to be found if you persevere. We recently bought a very nice woodcarving here for US $12, along with some beaded jewelry starting at $3. The market is much quieter than those in Mo Bay and Ocho Rios, so don't expect to hide in the masses – you will be spotted and asked (make that requested) to "come look at my things." Go with the flow, put a smile on your face, and enjoy the experience in good humor.

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *Bargaining is very much a part of the game; shoot for about half the asked price on most goods.*

Where to Stay

■ Resorts & Hotels

BAR-B-BARN
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4276, fax 876-957-4679
$

This 24-room inn is located on Negril Beach. The family-run property has air-conditioned rooms, on-site dining, satellite TV and, of course, a great beach. Rooms are located in pink, four-room complexes on a garden path. The resort is ultra-casual and laid back, perfect for travelers really wanting to relax. Each unit has a balcony with chairs.

BEACHES NEGRIL
West End Road
☎ 876-957-9270, fax 876-957-9269; reservations ☎ 800-BEACHES
www.beaches.com

HOTEL PRICES	
Rates per room based on double occupancy. Prices in all-inclusive properties are per person.	
$	Under US$50
$$	US$50-$100
$$$	US$101-$175
$$$$	Over US$175

Located on Long Bay, this is one of the newest members of the Sandals family. Unlike the other Sandals resorts, however, Beaches is for everyone: families, singles and couples. The 225-room property features five specialty restaurants and plenty of options for fun, ranging from scuba diving to video games at the Sega Center. This $25 million property is the answer to all those couples who enjoyed a vacation at Sandals but then wanted to take the kids back the next time.

Beaches is perched on Negril's famous Seven Mile Beach and offers something for everyone. There are three swimming pools, a sports complex with tennis, volleyball and basketball courts, watersports – you name it, it's here. Kids have a full Kids Camp with age-appropriate activities.

CHARELA INN
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4277, fax 876-957-4414
www.charela.com
$$-$$$

This 49-room hotel sits right on the beach in town. Its recently refurbished rooms are within steps of the sand; each has a private patio or balcony. One of our Negril favorites, Charela has excellent dining and is home to LaVendome Restaurant. Rooms are air conditioned and facilities include a pool, watersports and fitness center.

CHUCKLES
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4250, fax 876-957-9150
$$-$$$

Located in the community of Negril, this 73-room hotel offers air-conditioned rooms, a pool, satellite TV, tennis and a fitness center. Rooms aren't directly on the beach, but they do have a good view of Negril.

COCO LA PALM SEASIDE RESORT
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4227, fax 876-957-3460; reservations ☎ 800-320-8821
www.cocolapalm.com
$$-$$$

Coco La Palm is a quiet property with lush grounds and a beautiful stretch of beach. Our room, like most of those at the newly constructed resort, was large, and included a mini-refrigerator and a small patio. Home of the Seaside Bar and Grill.

CORAL SEAS BEACH RESORT
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-9226, fax 876-957-4269
www.coralseasnegril.com
$$$ (All-inclusive optional)
This beachfront 32-room inn offers air-conditioned rooms, kitchen facilities, satellite TV, watersports and a restaurant. Guests are welcome to enjoy facilities at the two other Coral Seas properties: Coral Seas Cliff and Coral Seas Garden. Amenities here include scuba diving, volleyball, wave running, snorkeling trips, massage and more.

THREE-FOR-ONE

The property has an all-inclusive option. Those who sign up can stay at sister properties, use facilities at all three resorts, enjoy meals and drinks at all three resorts and make use of the free airport shuttles from Montego Bay. It also includes shuttle service between resorts, a sunset sail or snorkel cruise, horseback riding, nanny service for young travelers, river safari, a half-hour of jet skiing and a massage.

CORAL SEAS CLIFF
West End
☎ 876-957-3147, fax 876-957-4269
$$-$$$ (All-inclusive optional)

This new 26-room inn is, predictably enough, located on the cliffs of Negril. You can swim in the pool or dive from the cliffs. Rooms are air conditioned and include satellite TV; the hotel has a restaurant and bar, freshwater pool, and a shuttle to a private beach. Guests are welcome to enjoy facilities at the two other Coral Seas properties. The hotel itself has good snorkeling off the cliffs (with easy access into the water other than diving in).

The property has the same all-inclusive option as is described above for the Coral Seas Beach Resort.

CORAL SEAS GARDEN
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4388, fax 876-957-4269
$$ (All-inclusive optional)

This 22-room inn is adjacent to the Royal Palm Reserve and is a favorite with birders. Rooms are air conditioned and there's a restaurant on site. Other facilities include a pool and satellite TV. Of special interest to adventure travelers, this property also has an adjoining river walk and bird sanctuary. Guests who stay at this property are welcome to enjoy facilities at the two other Coral Seas properties.

The property has the same all-inclusive option as is described above for the Coral Seas Beach Resort.

COUPLES SWEPT AWAY
Norman Manley Blvd.
☎ 800-couples
www.couples.com
$$$$ (All-inclusive)

Although the guestbook consists of largely male-female couples, travelers looking for a couples-only option for same sex clients can select Couples Swept Away. The Negril resort is the only property of the three which does accept same-sex couples, mother-daughter pairs, and others in addition to male-female couples. For group bookings, the resort accepts singles as well.

Couples Swept Away recently added 72 new guest rooms and one dining outlet. The additions fall into three categories: Gardenview, Oceanview and Beachfront Verandah Suites, with 24 new rooms in each category. All rooms are air conditioned, with ceiling fan, king-size bed, private shower and tub, satellite TV, CD player/radio, coffee maker, hair dryer, direct-dial telephone with data port, safety deposit box and stocked mini-bars. Additionally, each room opens onto a private verandah with a sofa, chairs and table.

Couples Swept Away is a favorite with active couples thanks to its 10-acre sports complex. The facility includes squash, tennis, racquetball,

basketball, a lap pool, jogging track, gym, and more. Of special interest to tennis lovers in the fall months, Couples Swept Away features world-class tennis with pros from across the US offering tips and classes.

Travelers can also explore the region on complimentary off-site excursions including golf at Negril Hills Golf Club (greens fees and transfers are complimentary but required caddy fees are not included), a sunset catamaran cruise, or a trip to Pirate's Cave, one of Negril's local sunset bars.

Every September, the resort celebrates Spa and Wellness month with special programs and classes free for guests. Options ranging from programs on medical hypnosis to herbal treatments are planned for the annual month-long event.

COUPLES SWEPT AWAY NEGRIL
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 800-268-7537 or 876-957-4061
www.couples.com
$$$$ (All-inclusive)

This is the newest resort in the city, a couples-only property that exudes a relaxed Caribbean atmosphere. As with Couples Ocho Rios, everything is included, from top-shelf liquors to watersports to transfers, as well as some off-property tours.

Travelers have their choice of 216 guest rooms as well as 18 one-bedroom suites, either garden or oceanview, each with a distinctive tropical décor. The guest rooms and suites include a king-size bed, satellite TV, CD player/radio, coffee maker, and in-room safe; suites also include Jacuzzi tub, stocked mini-bar, and hammocks.

Recently Couples Negril added free broadband Internet access for wireless users; the service is available in the piano bar as well as in parts of the lobby. Other options include four tennis courts (two lit for night play), golf at Negril Hills Golf Club (transfers and greens fees included but not mandatory caddy fees), scuba diving, windsurfing, sailing, weddings, and more. Guests can also sign up for a complimentary sunset catamaran cruise, a shopping trip into Negril, and a trip to Rick's Café.

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *Be sure to ask about the package deal combining a stay at Couples Ocho Rios with Couples Negril.*

DEVINE DESTINY
Summerset Road
☎ 876-957-3847, fax 876-957-3846
$$
This hotel is especially popular with Europeans and vacationing Jamaicans. It sits away from the beach, but a free shuttle service is available. Built around a beautiful pool area, the rooms have refrigerators and air conditioning or ceiling fans (make your requests if this is important to you).

FOOTE PRINTS ON THE SAND
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4300, fax 876-957-4301
$$$
Nestled right on Negril Beach, this 30-room resort has air-conditioned rooms, satellite TV, beach, tennis, watersports and kitchen facilities. It is especially known for its Friday night beach barbecues. Along with superior and deluxe rooms, two-bedroom units are also available. The hotel also has a dive shop on site.

GRAND LIDO NEGRIL
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-5011, fax 876-957-5517; reservations ☎ 877-GO-SUPER
www.superclubs.com
$$$$ (All-inclusive)

Part of the SuperClubs chain, this elegant resort is for overachievers who want to relax and kick back on the beach, but still enjoy 24-hour room service, top-shelf liquors and all the amenities of a fine resort. Grand Lido is especially proud of its *M/Y Zein*, a 147-foot yacht that takes guests on sunset cruises.

> **INTERESTING FACT:** The yacht was originally a wedding gift from Aristotle Onassis to Prince Rainier and Princess Grace.

Daily lessons are offered in snorkeling, scuba diving, tennis and water skiing. For something less strenuous, there's the white sand beach for lazy (and, along one stretch, nude) sunbathing or satellite TV back in the room. The property includes a spa and completed construction on 10 suites, including a presidential suite with private outdoor Jacuzzi. The resort presently offers tennis, a fitness center, windsurfing, transfers to

and from Negril Hills Country Club, watersports and a meeting facility for up to 200 attendees.

HEDONISM II
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-3660, fax 876-957-5289; reservations ☎ 877-GO-SUPER
www.superclubs.com
$$$-$$$$ (All-inclusive)

Hedonism II is a unique resort. It's definitely not for everyone, but for those who like a party-around-the-clock atmosphere, it can't be beat. Hedonism II draws travelers from around the world with its teen-fun feeling in an adults-only version. Guests are tempted with Bacchanalian feasts, bars open until 5 am, a disco that closes when the last reveler calls it quits and clothing-optional beaches. Every night is a party, and the biggest blowout occurs on Thursday.

Most meals at Hedonism II are served buffet style on the roofed terrace featuring a cool peach and gray decor. From breakfast to dinner, the buffets tempt diners with an orgy of foods ranging from local specialties like curried goat or jerk pork to such dishes as beef Wellington or ravioli. For a more elegant night out, reserve a table at the resort's specialty restaurant, Pastafari.

After dinner, a nightly show is organized by the resort's entertainment crew. You'll see guests and staff strut their stuff during talent night (which might include an amateur strip-tease), fly through the air during the circus show, or bend over backwards for the limbo contest.

Located on 22 lush tropical acres, Hedonism II offers plenty of natural beauty. A few barefoot steps from the sea, coconut palms, flowering hibiscus and banana trees create a mood of seclusion and privacy. The hotel faces the clear blue waters of Bloody Bay, named at a time when whalers cleaned their catch here.

The beach is the focal point of the resort, however, and it's part of seven miles of white sand for which Negril is best known. Once Negril was a fishing village most commonly regarded as a hangout for *ganja*-smoking Rastafarians and hippies who came to camp out on the sand. Today, this town of 1,600 is still less crowded than its north shore cousins, Montego Bay and Ocho Rios, but wildly popular with sunset lovers, scuba divers and sunbathers.

All meals, drinks, watersports, gear, taxes, lessons and entertainment are included in the package price, and tipping is prohibited. That means there's no need to carry cash or credit cards (another plus for nude beach buffs).

■ ADVENTURE TALKS
Interview with Hedonism II

Adventure comes in many forms, and for some it takes the hedonistic route. And there's no place more synonymous with hedonistic pursuits than this resort. We talked with Joseph Smith of Superclubs about the property.

Q. What is the attraction of Hedonism II?

A. We offer a level of freedom and relaxation that most other resorts in the Caribbean don't. Almost anything goes. We have almost no dress code. People are very comfortable. We allow people to make the vacation what they want it to be. We're not selling presidential suites or room service; we're selling an experience.

Q. Tell us more about your repeat business.

A. We have many repeaters – one guest has been here 91 times! We literally have hundreds, possibly thousands, who have been over 20 times. We have a 40% repeat business and some weeks almost as much as 100%. I don't know of another resort with that repeat rate.

Q. What's one of the most popular times with repeaters?

A. Halloween week. That's when we have a 90% repeat rate. Guests bring their own Halloween costumes. Also, on New Year's weekend we have a 70% repeat week. During the winter months, the repeat rate is 55%. Because of the high stress level in the world of work, people are looking to relax and get away.

SUNSET AT THE PALMS RESORT
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-5350, fax 876-957-5381
$$$-$$$$

Negril is bordered to the east by the Great Morass. This swampland is rich with peat, a substance that was considered as a possible energy source in the 1970s when scientists studied the feasibility of mining it. Environmental concerns about damage to Negril's famous beach put a stop to the plans. During the study of the Morass, these researchers lived in cabins in Negril.

Today, Negril Cabins utilizes those original structures, plus several new buildings, operating as a resort that combines the luxuries of a hotel with the natural experience of camping. Visitors enjoy Swiss Family Robinson-style accommodations in cabins perched on stilts. Lush grounds are filled with indigenous Jamaican flora and fauna, including colorful hummingbirds. There are 24 standard rooms with telephone, ceiling fan, private shower and private balcony. More than 60 air-conditioned superior rooms also have satellite TV. Dining options include the Coconut Palm

Restaurant, the Alfresco Restaurant for buffet dinners Monday through Friday nights, a bar and grill at poolside and a beach snack bar.

NEGRIL GARDENS
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4408, fax 876-957-4374; reservations ☎ 800-752-6824
www.negrilgardens.com
$$$ (All-inclusive optional)

This resort has an all-inclusive plan, but can also be booked as an EP (meals-only) stay, dinner only or breakfast and dinner. With 66 rooms, this pink two-story property is situated on both sides of Norman Manley Boulevard.

NEGRIL TREE HOUSE
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4287, fax 876-957-4386; reservations ☎ 800-NEGRIL-1
www.negril-treehouse.com
$$$

This 70-room inn on the beach offers air-conditioned rooms, onsite dining, satellite TV, tennis, watersports and beach parties on Monday nights. Guests can also opt for some spa treatments, such as massage.

OUR PAST TIME VILLAS
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-5203, fax 876-957-5422;
Reservations ☎ 800-270-0121 or 888-634-7450
www.negriljamaica.com/OurPastTime/index.html
$$$

These 16 apartments are located near Negril Beach. Most are air conditioned and have kitchen facilities (there's also a restaurant and bar on site) as well as a pool.

ROCKHOUSE
West End Road
☎ 876-957-4373, fax 876-957-0557
www.rockhousehotel.com
$$$

Another small inn along Negril's cliffs. Just steps from busy West End Road, once through the gates at Rockhouse you'll feel that you are tucked away from the world. The restaurant and bar are perched high on Negril's bluffs and look directly out to sea and an unbeatable sunset. Rooms here are constructed from wood, thatch and stone, like something out of Gilligan's Island. The

natural theme of this resort is carried out in the open-air showers. This inn just added new studio rooms and a spectacular clifftop pool. "We can give more individual service because we are not a huge hotel," explains the managing director. "What is special about this property is its location on a pristine cove."

RONDEL VILLAGE
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4413, fax 876-957-4915
www.negril.com/rondrate.htm
$$$$
This 16-room complex consists of one- and two-bedroom octagon-shaped villas; all have private whirlpool spas. Villas include maid service, cable TV, air conditioning, kitchen facilities, restaurant, beach bar, watersports, pool and satellite TV. The best feature of these units is their three-sided balcony, perfect for watching the comings and goings along the beach.

ROOTS BAMBOO
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4479
www.rootsbamboo.com, info@rootsbamboo.com
$-$$
Roots Bamboo advertises itself as the "True Jamacan Vacation." There is some of the hippie-era spirit in this funky beach hangoout. It offers simple accommodations, some with private bath, as well as campsites on the sand of Negril Beach. A restaurant serves Jamaican specialties for breakfast, lunch and dinner, and the beach bar will save you from dehydration. At night, Roots Bamboo becomes a very happening place, drawing people from the surrounding area to groove at open-air reggae concerts. Local craftsmen are featured on Wednesday nights, offering their wares to the public.

SANDALS NEGRIL
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 800-726-3257 or 876-957-5216, fax 876-957-5338
www.sandals.com
$$$$ (All-inclusive)
Part of the Sandals couples-only chain that originated in Jamaica, this resort is popular with young, sports-oriented couples. Watersports are a big offering and the resort even reserves one pool just for scuba lessons. Tennis, racquetball, squash and other activities are included for landlubbers. Like other resorts in the Sandals chain, Sandals Negril offers guests the Stay at One, Dine at Six policy. Guests can dine at other Sandals resorts if they venture to Montego Bay or Ocho Rios.

SEA SPLASH RESORT
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4041, fax 876-957-4049
seasplash@cwjamaica.com
$$
Located right on Negril Beach, this property has air-conditioned accommodations, a gourmet restaurant, beach bar, satellite TV, pool, Jacuzzi and more. After a meal at Tan-ya's, the on-site restaurant, take a few minutes to look around the pretty resort. This popular family destination offers 15 suites (all one-bedroom), each just steps from the beach.

THE CAVES
West End Road
☎ 800-OUTPOST, fax 876-957-4930
www.islandoutpost.com, thecaves@cwjamaica.com
$$$$

At this tranquil property guests fall asleep to the sound of waves echoing through the namesake for this inn, sea caves formed from ancient volcanic rock and the pounding surf. In the day, vacationers leave one of the hand-crafted cottages and snorkel among these grottos and caves or sun on the decks among the cliffs. A special treat is a massage in the sea cave, during which you can listen to the undulating waves. The Caves offers Aveda services, from massage to an invigorating sea salt glow using salts from the Dead Sea. Breakfast and lunch are served beneath a thatched palapa and dinner is available by arrangement. The Caves also has a saltwater plunge pool and cliffside Jacuzzi. Rooms are decorated with hand-carved furniture and center around a bed draped in mosquito netting. All rooms have CD/cassette players, TV/VCR, phone and outdoor bamboo-enclosed shower.

XTABI
Lighthouse Road, West End
☎ 876-957-0121, fax 876-957-0827
www.xtabi-negril.com, xtabiresort@cwjamaica.com
$-$$
This cliffside hotel is one of our favorite budget properties in Jamaica. Clinging to Negril's stony cliffs, Xtabi offers simple rooms, a cliffside restaurant and plenty of opportunities to sun on the cliffs or snorkel in the clear waters below. The hotel is built atop five cliff caves that can be explored; stairs wind down through the cliffs to the water.

Where to Eat

■ American Restaurants

MARGUERITAVILLE
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4467
$$

Like its sister property in Montego Bay, this new establishment offers rowdy fun. The super-casual restaurant is better known for its party atmosphere than its food. Look for a Frisbee golf course, volleyball, basketball and a beach club. Serves burgers, sandwiches, fish, chicken, lobster, and over 50 types of margaritas.

DINING PRICES	
Price per person for a meal, with drink and gratuity.	
$	Under US$15
$$	US$15-$30
$$$	US$31-$45
$$$$	Over US$45

RICK'S CAFE
West End Road
☎ 876-957-0380
$$

Negril's top sunset bar, Rick's is also a popular restaurant. Burgers, filet mignon, kingfish, broiled lobster, jerk chicken, coco bread pizza and blackened chicken breast are served in the open-air dining room. It's definitely not the place to go for a romantic dinner (the daredevils jumping off the cliffs take care of that), but it is always a fun hangout.

"We're famous for our view of the sunset," says co-owner and general manager Tom Martin. "The crowd gathers and applauds the sunset. Rick's started in 1974 and watching the last beam of light for the day has become a tradition. We keep the traditional Jamaican food and beverage on the menu."

> **GREEN FLASH:** Rick's and other spots along Negril's westward-looking cliffs are favorites for those looking to see the green flash. Just what is the green flash? Not the superhero in tights. The lowercase green flash is a natural phenomenon that, under the right conditions, is seen as the sun drops into the sea, a momentary green sizzle on the horizon. Science explains it as the refraction of sunlight through the thick lens of the Earth's atmosphere. Island lore links it to romance: couples who witness the flash are guaranteed true love. All agree it's a rare sight, requiring just the right combination of sun, sky and luck. (Skeptics would add other requirements as well. "How many rum punches does it take to see it?")

■ Asian Cuisine

KIMONOS
Sandals Negril, Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-5216
$$$ (All-inclusive)

This couples-only restaurant features Teppanyaki-style dining; chefs prepare meals right at the table. Start with Caribbean-style sushi, Cantonese spring rolls or crab and sweetcorn soup. For the entrées, the chef prepares a feast of sesame chicken breast, strip steak sukiyaki, sherry tiger shrimp, pork tenderloin Caribe, ginger teppan scallops, and glazed marlin teriyaki served with sushi rice and stir-fried vegetables.

TEPPANYAKI
Beaches Negril, West End Road
☎ 876-957-9270
$$$ (All-inclusive)

We recently enjoyed a great dinner here. Diners are entertained by their chef, making this a combination show and dinner. Entrées are prepared at the table by a teppanyaki chef and include chicken breast yakitori infused with lemongrass, dry sherry, ginger, sesame oil and spring onions; pork filet Loisin Jeung brushed with Hoisin sauce and finished with toasted cashews; and beef teriyaki marinated in a light soy sauce and enhanced with honey, garlic and pickled ginger. Kids enjoy the Junior Emperors Platter with vegetable spring rolls, and chicken nuggets and breaded shrimp served with apricot and honey dip.

■ Bars

RICK'S CAFE
West End Road, ☎ 876-957-0380, $

Even if you don't come for the dinner, stop by for a drink at sunset.

■ Caribbean Cuisine

THE SUNDOWNER
Sandals Negril, Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-5216
$$$ (All-inclusive)

White-gloved service makes a meal at this eatery a special experience. The couples-only restaurant serves Caribbean cuisine starting with appetizers such as Bahamian conch salad, ackee and saltfish or Grenadian ham patty. Entrée options include Jamaican steamed fish; Trinidadian

roti; jerked suckling pig; West Indian cassoulet; and St. Vincent Pelau, chicken sautéed in brown sugar and cooked with tomato, peas and rice.

■ Continental Cuisine

FEATHERS CONTINENTAL RESTAURANT
Couples Swept Away, Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4061
$$$ (All-inclusive)
Fine dining is the order of the day at Feathers, the gourmet restaurant of Swept Away. Menu offerings start with pan-seared sweetbreads in a vermouth reduction, Courvoisier escargots in crisped phyllo and Cornish game hen galantine on a berry and lemongrass relish. Entrées range from baked Black River crayfish to ackee-enhanced vegetable bolognaise to roasted loin of pork with a grain mustard accompanied by mango chutney.

PIACERE
Grand Lido Negril, Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-5011
$$$ (All-inclusive)
This elegant eatery is one of the best all-inclusive restaurants on the island, and (unlike the other fine dining restaurants at SuperClubs resorts) is available only to guests of Grand Lido Negril. Start the meal with chausson of duck confit; slivers of home-smoked pork tenderloin; seafood symphony pancake; or chilled mango nectar. Entrées are equally intriguing: tournedos of Black Angus beef tenderloin; grilled swordfish grenadine; roasted Provimi veal chop; pan-fried deep-sea halibut; and roast crown of lamb. Finish off the evening with a taste of Blue Mountain coffee and a decadent dessert.

■ Jamaican Restaurants

BAMBOO RESTAURANT
Roots Bamboo, Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4479, fax 876-957-9191
www.rootsbamboo.com, info@rootsbamboo.com
$
Jamaican and international dishes are served at this casual eatery. If you're not hungry, just stop by the Roots Bamboo Beach Bar for fun on the sand.

CASAVA TERRACE
Couples Negril, Norman Manley Boulevard

☎ 800-268-7537
$$$ (All-inclusive)

Night passes are available for non-guests at Couples Negril, the latest addition to this resort community's all-inclusive offerings. The restaurant offers a fine selection of local cuisine. Choose from such favorites as brown stew chicken; braised oxtail with broad beans; West Indian vegetarian roti; grilled lobster medallions with lime-garlic butter; Creole Bloody Bay stew with okra; baked squirrel fish in banana leaves; and, of course, rice and peas.

COCONUT PALM RESTAURANT
Sunset at the Palms Resort, Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-5350
$$-$$$

We have fond memories of this open-air eatery that bring back the spicy tastes of Jamaica and the joy of dining beneath the stars. Jamaican dishes grace the menu, all prepared by a talented chef. Dress is casually elegant.

KUYABA ON THE BEACH
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4318
$-$$

Dine on international dishes with a Jamaican flair. The mood here is as casual as can be; feel free to go from the restaurant right out to the beach.

LAVENDOME RESTAURANT
Charela Inn, Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4277, fax 876-967-9765
kuyaba@cwjamaica.com
$$$

Dine inside or outdoors just steps away from the sand at this fun restaurant that features Jamaican dishes with a French twist.

ORCHID TERRACE RESTAURANT
Negril Gardens, Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4408
$$$

This casual restaurant offers dining with a different theme every night. On Wednesday night, enjoy a beach barbecue; Sunday is Jamaican night, featuring the Ashanti Dancers in a spectacular show.

OTAHEITE
Couples Negril, Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-5370
$$$ (All-inclusive)

Otaheite is the fine dining option at Couples Negril. Dishes offer a gourmet twist on local cuisine and chefs really outdo themselves with the entrées, which marry Jamaican ingredients and gourmet talents. Some of the mouth-watering dishes are: pan-seared Atlantic salmon with jerk coating; grilled lamb shoulder chops; wild rabbit; and doro wot. Doro wot is the national dish of Ethiopa, a skinless chicken stew with a blend of Ethiopian spices.

THE ROCKHOUSE RESTAURANT AND BAR
Rockhouse, West End Road
☎ 876-957-4373
$$
Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served at this open-air eatery. Its just steps from busy West End Road but, once through the gates at Rockhouse and seated beneath the restaurant's thatched roof, you are in another world. The restaurant and bar are perched high on Negril's bluffs, looking directly out to sea and an unbeatable sunset. Jamaican cuisine with European influences is the specialty here.

SEASIDE BAR AND GRILL
Coco La Palm Seaside Resort, Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4227
$$
This open-air restaurant is one of Negril's best. A diverse menu keeps things interesting, with Jamaican specialties transformed into culinary masterpieces. Menu selections include coconut-crusted snapper on a bed of callaloo; rum and lime broiled chicken breast with honey-lime butter; and jerk festival fettucine.

SEVILLE
Beaches Negril, West End Road
☎ 876-957-9270
All-inclusive
Non-guests can buy a night pass for Beaches Negril and select from one of several restaurants, including this Jamaican eatery. Here, white-gloved attendants serve Jamaican dishes prepared with a gourmet flair. Menu selections include jerked salmon fillet; grilled beef tenderloin; lamb loin Wellington; pimento wood-smoked pork loin; and pan-seared veal medallions.

SWEET SPICE
1 White Hall Road
☎ 876-957-4621
$
At Sweet Spice you'll be cooled by a small fan and the breeze that comes through the open doorway. Artwork on the blue tinted walls consists of

framed towels with Jamaican axioms. But this restaurant is the real thing: a Jamaican diner with food to match. Conch steak, barbecued chicken and curried goat, shrimp and chicken are top offerings, served with rice. Cool off with a pawpaw daiquiri or a piña colada. For a real taste of Jamaica home cooking, this restaurant is one of the best spots in Negril.

TAN-YA'S
Sea Splash Resort, Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4041
$-$$
Save plenty of time for a meal at Tan-yas... you'll need it. We enjoyed breakfast here, but were starting to think about lunch when our plates finally came out. This is a small operation with an even a smaller kitchen, so don't expect fast food turnaround times. As Jamaicans often say, soon come and yes, it will soon come. Be patient. Enjoy the beautiful beach. Take a walk if you like. When it comes, your meal will have been worth the wait. We ordered ackee and bacon, a delightful twist on a traditional island favorite. It was one of the best breakfasts we've ever had. You can also have lunch or dinner in this casual eatery, where each table is tucked beneath its own palm-thatched roof.

■ Seafood Restaurants

COSMO'S SEAFOOD RESTAURANT AND BAR
Norman Manley Boulevard
☎ 876-957-4330
$$$
Cosmo's is a long-time favorite. Very casual, the restaurant is right on the beach and folks wander in and out on their way to the sand and sea.

Nightlife

Negril is known for its nightlife – not the glitzy, dress-up kind, but the funky, barefoot style that's the essence of Negril. You'll find that every night, one particular club is the place to be. Throughout the day, you'll often hear cars with loudspeakers driving up and down Norman Manley Boulevard announcing that night's show. As you walk through town, notice the neon signs indicating upcoming acts.

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *We recommend asking your hotel concierge for the best night spots. No concierge? No problem. Just about anyone in Negril can point you to*

that night's hot spot. We tested it out recently and everyone, from front desk staff to the taxi drivers, knew the place to be on any given night.

■ Beach Shows

ALFRED'S OCEAN PALACE
Norman Manley Boulevard, ☎ 876-957-4735
Wear your shorts and t-shirt for Alfred's, a genuine beach bar. The shows are held outside (actually, there's not really an inside). The crowd of both locals and tourists fills the beach.

KUYABA BEACH RESTAURANT AND BAR
Norman Manley Boulevard, ☎ 876-957-4318
This eatery features all types of tropical music early in the evenings.

RISKY BUSINESS
Norman Manley Boulevard, ☎ 876-957-3008
Like Alfred's, Risky Business is another happening reggae joint.

■ Disco

HEDONISM II
Norman Manley Boulevard, ☎ 876-957-5200
There's no hotter place in Negril (or on the island, for that matter) than the disco at Hedonism II. You'll have to pay a hefty fee for a night pass, which includes all your drinks and food once you're on property. The disco features an incredible light and sound system and a rotating theme. The most popular night is Tuesday, when it's PJ night and anything goes: thong bikinis, bondage suits, you name it. The action doesn't start until after 11 and goes on until the last person staggers out of the disco.

■ ■ ■

South Coast

Introduction

Throughout the years, we had seen fire eaters, limbo dancers, contortionists, and just about every other imaginable island show in Jamaica. When we made plans for a "Mandeville cultural night," we were ready for half-naked men, flaming limbo sticks or, at the very least, flying knives juggled in the evening air.

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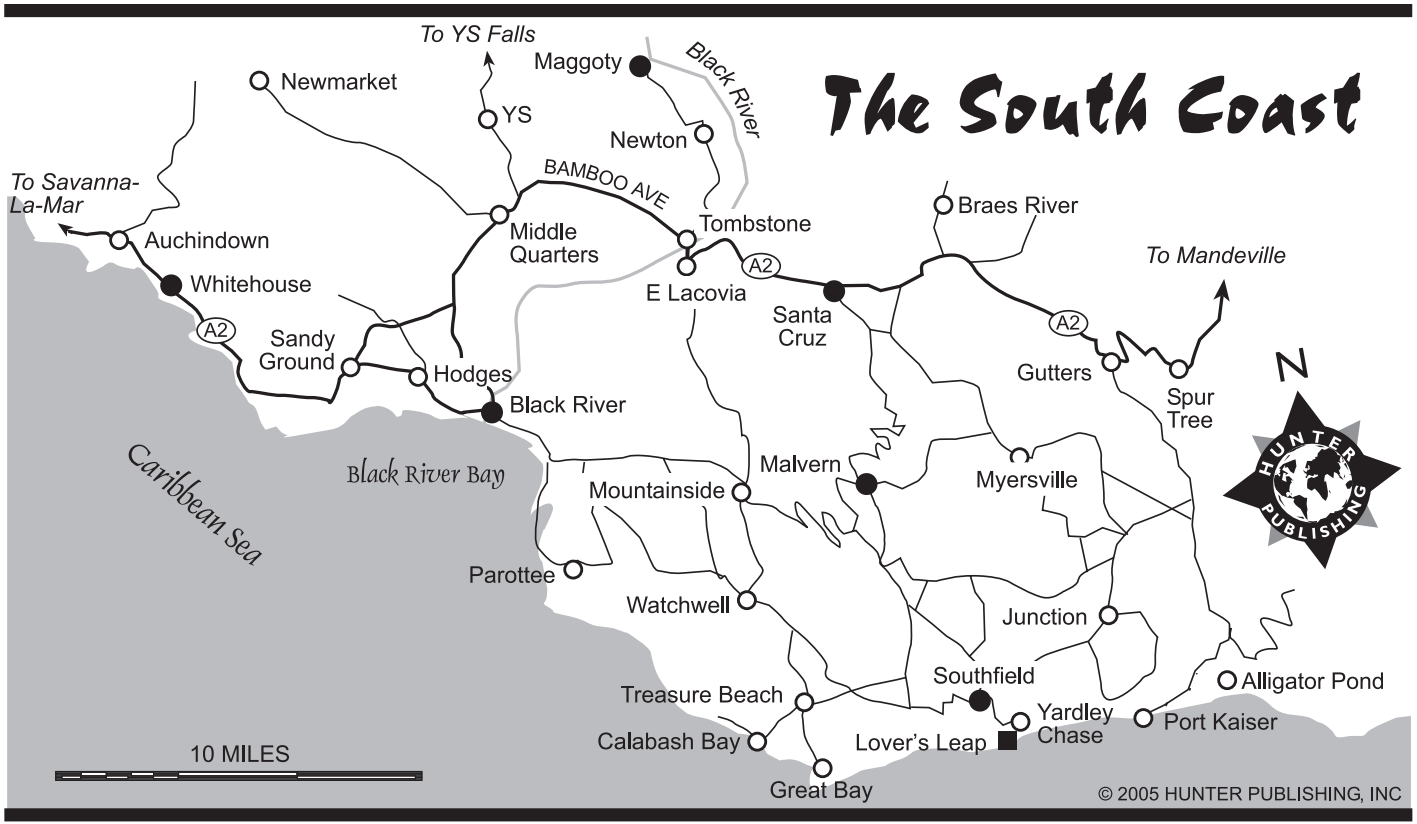
Boy, were we wrong!

We experienced a Jamaican evening that no multi-million dollar resort could match. We arrived at the Astra Hotel, one of Mandeville's modest properties tucked high in the hills over 2,000 feet above the sea level. There to greet us was Diana McIntyre-Pike, arranger of the evening's activities. Diana is the owner and founder of Countrystyle, one of two programs designed to link travelers with Jamaican residents so they can learn more about island life. Our hostess introduced us to Jasmine Pottinger and her husband, who had recently returned to their homeland of Jamaica after 30 years in London. Now Jasmine is active in the Return Residents Association, often holding teas in her home for both residents and visitors.

Then we met Gregory Wilson and his fiancée, a teacher in the local school. Gregory is active in a community youth program, working to find young residents jobs in their area of interest, not an easy task in a nation with mounting unemployment. In the early morning hours, Gregory could frequently be found walking or jogging the Mandeville roads, often accompanying visitors out to get a little exercise. But that evening, Gregory joined the rest of us at this intimate dinner party.

For two hours, we dined on Jamaican cuisine – rice and peas, jerk chicken, callaloo, and more – and talked about life in Jamaica, Caribbean politics, and the ways in which our lives both were different and, in many ways, similar. Then Gregory pulled out a folder of papers from beneath his seat: the evening's entertainment. A published poet, he shared with the group some of his work, reading in a clear voice poems about English tea, love and conflict, all with the faint sound of tree frogs piping in the distance.

"I have never seen so much talent as in Jamaica," noted Diana as the evening's poems drew to a close. Diana sets up these evenings in small inns


The South Coast
To YS Falls
Maggoty
Black River
Newmarket
YS
Newton
BAMBOO AVE
To Savanna-La-Mar
Auchindown
Middle Quarters
Tombstone
Braes River
To Mandeville
Whitehouse
A2
E Lacovia
Santa Cruz
Sandy Ground
Hodges
Black River
Gutters
Spur Tree
N
Caribbean Sea
Black River Bay
Malvern
Myersville
Mountainside
Parottee
Watchwell
Junction
Southfield
Alligator Pond
Treasure Beach
Yardley Chase
Port Kaiser
Calabash Bay
Lover's Leap
Great Bay
10 MILES
HUNTER PUBLISHING
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throughout the island, giving visitors a peek at the literary and musical talent that island residents have to offer. Frustrated by the "native" shows at many resorts, Diana has set out to provide visitors with real Jamaican entertainment. "These shows are a means of getting the best out of our country."

A destination that has been plagued by bad publicity and stories of hasslers, drug salesmen, and occasional theft or vandalism, Jamaica is working hard to show travelers that hasslers are a small minority in the population and also to explain to residents that tourism can enhance their lives and culture. "Our focus has to do with the entire community in every respect because we are protecting the spiritual, economic and historic aspects of the area," pointed out Diana. "We want tourism to enhance the lives of the people, not change it."

Visitors can call Countrystyle Community Experience (☎ 876-962-7979/3265) to set up any type of tour or activity based on their interests. Recent vacationers have toured private home gardens, enjoyed photo tours with local camera buffs, gone nightclub-hopping in Kingston, visited local schools and stayed in local homes. Countrystyle Community Experience sets up visits throughout the island.

Days after our dinner in Mandeville, the words of Gregory Wilson's poems still echoed in our minds. The poems and an evening of shared company gave us a look at the real Jamaica and stayed with us long after our island tan faded away.

Our evening experience in Mandeville was an excellent introduction to the community and the South Coast. We had traveled to Mandeville from Negril, winding along a road that skirted the coast, before heading inland toward the Don Figuero Mountains. With every switchback, we ventured farther and farther from the boisterous, sybaritic resort town and closer to a region that truly represents the dignified, proper side of this island rarely seen by tourists.

Mandeville is one of Jamaica's hidden treasures, a community tucked high in the mountains at an elevation of 2,000 feet above sea level, ensuring cooler days and nights than in the coastal communities. The region first appealed to Jamaica's English settlers, who came here to escape the heat and founded a town in 1816. Soon, an English-style community, with a central square and clock tower, was established. Small hotels arose to serve the expatriates and the travelers who came to do business in the area's bauxite industry. But in the 1950s, Jamaica's other assets, its beautiful beaches and coastal areas, began to outshine this getaway. Tourism in Mandeville declined, although the area became a favorite with Jamaicans who had lived abroad and returned to retire, building grand homes.

Today Mandeville is a strong contrast to other Jamaican cities. Shiny new fast food outlets stand on clean, guttered streets. Jamaica's omni-

present burglar bars are missing from many residences. Massive homes, as impressive as any along the California coastline, cling to hillsides. No vendors search for travelers. Still, the city remains true to its Jamaican roots. In this environment almost devoid of tourists, adventure travelers can meet Jamaica residents up close and personal. Take a stroll around town, dine in one of the small, local restaurants, and don't be surprised by an invitation to join someone at a private party in their home.

It's easy to see that Mandeville boasts the highest standard of living on the island as well as the lowest crime rate. Much of the wealth seen in the town comes from the **Alcan Jamaica bauxite plant**, the region's major employer.

■ Attractions

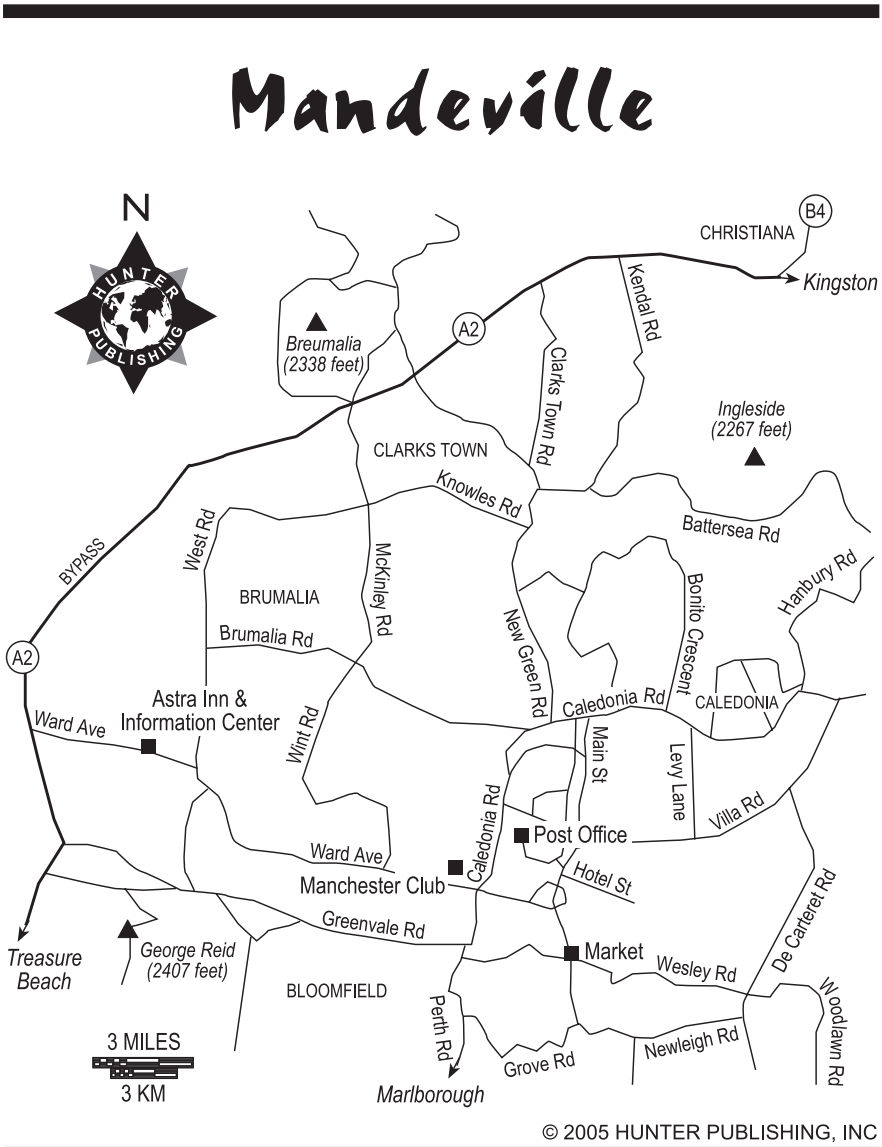
Throughout Jamaica it's common to see pedestrians, but in Mandeville these walkers stroll, not just to the market or to a hotel job, but on their morning constitutional. Many folks spend their free time at the **Manchester Club**, the oldest golf course in the Caribbean. This nine-hole course is set on rolling hills. Nearby tennis courts challenge players and indoor squash courts offer more fast action. Other activities in Mandeville include a tour of the **High Mountain Coffee Factory.** Jamaica's second best-known variety after Blue Mountain, this coffee originates on nearby plantations and is produced here at the factory. Tours can be arranged and a sample taste of the island's java awaits at the gift shop.

Nature lovers flock to Mandeville. Twenty-five bird species are endemic to Jamaica and all but two are found in this region. Garden lovers can stroll the fragrant fields at **Mrs. Stephenson's Garden**. The winner of many prizes from the Mandeville Horticulture Society, the gardens are filled with orchids as well as a fruit that was developed in Mandeville: the ortanique. The combination orange and tangerine is unique, hence the name.

In all directions beyond Mandeville's borders, the roads continue their scenic routes, either into the hills of **Christiana**, the rich agricultural regions on the drive to **Spanish Town** and finally Kingston, or on one of Jamaica's most scenic drives toward the **South Coast**. Here, **Bamboo Avenue** winds for over two miles, a green tunnel of tall bamboo that arches over the roadway. Along the road's edge, vendors sell chilled young coconuts, cracked open with a quick machete chop to reveal the jelly inside.

The South Coast is home to the community of **Black River**, another must for eco-tourists. While travelers to the North Coast resorts are happy to hear "no problem" as an answer to just about any request, whether its for another Red Stripe beer or a taxi or more towels in the

room, in Black River you'll hear "no problem" in response to spotting a seven-foot crocodile. There's no need to fear; these crocodiles represent no threat. Unlike their cousins on the Nile, the *Americanus crocodilius* is not aggressive. Like vacationers on the nearby beaches, they're content to lie in the sun and take life easy.



INTERESTING FACT: The 44-mile-long Black River is the longest in Jamaica. It is named for the color of its water that comes from the peat bog runoff.

The water on the lower stretch of the Black River is brackish, as saltwater comes in and mixes with the freshwater during high tide. These conditions are perfect for mangroves, which have roots that cascade from high branches and reach the water. The result is a curtain of thick roots, an almost impenetrable fence that divides the river from the marshy swampland beyond the trees.

Black River fishermen use wire traps to catch blue Marie crabs. Shrimp are caught using a traditional trap, an African design dating back over 400 years. The bamboo trap, shaped like a large inverted bottle, holds coconut and oranges in the wide end. After two or three days in the river, the trap is checked and the shrimp fall out when the smaller end is twisted (much like pouring liquid from a bottle). Although crocodiles reside in these tea-colored waters, you'll see men snorkeling along the river's edge. With a speargun in hand, they fish for the evening meal. Others fish from dugout canoes, many using techniques brought from Africa's Niger River centuries ago. The waters are also dotted with bull rushes, giant ferns (one of 600 species found in this country) and pancake lilies.

If you tour the river with a guide, he or she will probably point out things of interest, such as a 35-year-old termite nest and trees where over 3,000 cattle egrets nest nightly. But the biggest attraction on the Black River isthe crocodiles. Once hunted, these crocodiles are now protected, but they remain wary of humans. Loud talk (or even a spear fisherman at work) causes the crocodile to take refuge.

Getting Around

There is no commercial airport in Mandeville. Travelers usually arrive in Kingston and rent a car to make the two-hour drive to Mandeville.

■ Car & Jeep Rentals

Away from the main tourist areas, rental cars are scarce. Mandeville has just a few companies.

CAR RENTAL AGENCIES	
Maxdan Car Rentals & Tours	☎ 876-962-5341 (6 North Race Course Road)
Millinex Rentals	☎ 876-962-3542 (3 Villa Road)
Moon Glow Car Rental	☎ 876-962-9097 (3 Caledonia Road)

■ Guided Tours

APPLETON ESTATE RUM TOUR
Jamaica Estate Tours
☎ 876-963-9215 or 876-963-9508, fax 876-963-9218
or check with your hotels tour desk
Hours: 9 am-3:30 pm daily, except Sundays
Admission charged

Sugarcane is a major agricultural product in this region and for nearly 250 years the Appleton Estate has produced one of the island's top exports made from it. Take a tour of the rum distillery Monday through Saturday. Visitors receive a complimentary bottle of rum at the end of the tour.

BAUXITE TOURS
Mandeville
☎ 876-962-3725, 876-962-3265 or 800/JAMAICA
Tours by reservation only

Okay, a tour of a bauxite mine doesn't float everyone's boat, but if you are interested in tours of Alcan Jamaica, they can be arranged with a day's notice. Offered on weekdays only.

BLACK RIVER SAFARI BOAT TOURS LTD.
Black River
☎ 876-965-2513
Open daily

This is a popular day trip that takes travelers up the Black River, whose waters contain snook and tarpon, some weighing up to 200 pounds. You may see spear fishermen with a snorkel, mask and speargun, swimming in the dark water stained by peat deposits. Among their catch are tiny brine shrimp, sold by women in the St. Elizabeth parish along the roadside. Highly salted and spiced, the shrimp are a popular snack. The fishermen's canoes are hand-hewn and burned out using a generations-old technique. The biggest attraction on the Black River is the crocodiles. This protected species can live as long as 100 years, and some of the old-timers have become known by local residents. One 15-foot-long croc named Lester is seen nightly.

COUNTRYSTYLE COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE
PO Box 60 62, Ward Avenue
Mandeville
☎ 876-962-7758 or 876-340-6176, fax 876-962-0700
www.countrystylecommunityexperience.com

These unique tours specialize in community visits. You can set your own itinerary and visit those establishments you're interested in – whether that means local churches, hospitals, roadside bars, discos, gardens, schools, farms or private homes. Along with tours, CountryStyle also offers packages with accommodations in small hotels, guest houses and even private homes. This operation is headed by Diana McIntyre-Pike, one of the dynamos of Jamaica tourism and a fountain of information and contacts. We highly recommend this company as a way to step off the beaten path and get to know Jamaica on a one-to-one basis.

■ ADVENTURE TALKS
Interview with Countrystyle Community Experience

A real dynamo in the world of Jamaican tourism, Diana McIntyre-Pike, founder of the company, has helped focus the attention of the tourism world on Mandeville and the South Coast – not an easy task in competition with the flashy destinations along the North Coast. We recently stayed with Diana and talked with her about her tourism goals.

Q. What is the goal of Countrystyle Community Experience?

A. We are focusing not just on foreign visitors, but also on Jamaicans who do not know their own country. Our company offers community experiences of all kinds – cultural, historic, farm. Nothing is impossible for us. We are also an information network. We want tourism to enhance the lives of the people, not change it. It is about making friends, and that's what keeps people coming back.

Q. What would you tell people about getting out and seeing Jamaica?

A. There is a definite perception that Jamaica is not safe and that can make people shy away from our programs. I've been doing this for 20 years and have never had one incident. We never take people to places we are not familiar with, and visitors should keep in mind that they are visiting an entire community. Jamaicans are very hospitable.

Jamaica is so diverse. Everywhere is so different. Kingston has the best nightlife on the island, but visitors shouldn't go on their own; they should go with the community.

Q. Why should people come to Mandeville?

A. Mandeville is the best place to base yourself as you discover the country because every place but Port Antonio is within a day's drive. You can't come to Montego Bay or Mandeville alone and say you've seen Jamaica.

FOUNDATION FOR SICK CHILDREN

To benefit chronically ill Jamaican children, the **Rebecca Pike Foundation for Sick Children** was established in 1992. The foundation supports families who need financial help for critically ill babies and sick children who need specialized care. It also strives to assist in improving the maternity and pediatric care facilities at Hargreaves Memorial Hospital in Mandeville. For more information, write the Rebecca Pike Foundation, PO Box 60, Mandeville, Jamaica, West Indies, ☎ 876-962-3265, fax 876-962-1461.

JACANA AQUA TOURS & IRIE SAFARI
Black River
☎ 876-965-2211 or 876-384-7673
Hours: 8:30-5 daily

Jacana offers a safari boat tour on the Black River. The package includes a trip to YS Falls. You'll learn that the Salt Spring River meets the Black River and that this waterway was, for many decades, the main transportation route for rum and sugarcane. The cruise takes you past many mangroves, which need 15% saltwater to survive. In these waters pancake lilies, blue Marie crabs and bullrush thrive. The tide sometimes rises as much as 18 inches so saltwater comes in and mixes with the freshwater fed in by the tributaries. Flooding isn't a problem because of the surrounding fields of peat, which serve as a giant sponge to soak up the excess moisture. Bird lovers will find many sights along the tour as well, including one spot where over 3,000 cattle egrets live in the trees.

MARVELOUS MANDEVILLE TOUR
☎ 876-962-7979, 876-962-3265 or 800-JAMAICA, fax 876-962-1461
Tours by reservation only

A Marvelous Mandeville Tour (US $40) includes a welcome get-together at a local home, tour of Mandeville, shopping, lunch and high tea. The tour is operated by Diana McIntyre-Pike, owner of the Astra Country Inn and Restaurant and founder of Countrystyle Tours (see above).

MRS. STEPHENSON'S GARDEN TOUR
☎ 876-962-7979 or 876-962-3265 or 800/JAMAICA, fax 876-962-1461
Mandeville
Open by appointment only

Mrs. Stephenson has won many prizes from the Mandeville Horticulture Society. Her gardens are filled with orchids as well as the unique ortanique, a citrus fruit that combines orange and tangerine.

PICKAPEPPA SAUCE FACTORY TOUR
Shooters Hill
☎ 876-603-3441
Tours by appointment only

Near Mandeville, Shooters Hill is the home to one of Jamaica's best known (and one of our best loved) exports: Pickapeppa Sauce. It is used by cooks to spice up eggs, meats and sauces, and is a mix of tamarind, onions, tomatoes, sugarcane vinegar, mangoes, raisins and other spices. Pickapeppa Sauce is prepared in this small, nondescript factory. Tours aren't scheduled, but if you're interested, call Countrystyle Community Experience (☎ 876- 962-7758) to see if they can help you get a look at this fragrant operation.

ST. ELIZABETH SAFARIS
Black River
☎ 876-965-2374
Hours: 8:30 am-5 pm daily

Tours (1½ hours) of the Black River and YS Falls are available from this large operator. The trip includes an excursion up the river for a chance to see crocodiles, birds and fishermen. River trips leave daily at 9, 11, 2 and 3:30; YS tours leave every half-hour from 9 to 3:30.

SHAFSTON TOURS
Bluefields
☎ 876-869-9212
mail@shafston.com, www.shafston.com

These guided tours give travelers a real taste of Jamaica with hikes, historic site visits, fishing, and more. For full details on everything they offer, see page 209-10.

■ ADVENTURE TALKS
Interview with Shafston Tours

Frank Lohmann of both Shafston Tours and the Shafston Greathouse offers his guests and tour participants a look at the quiet sites of the South Coast. We recently interviewed Frank Lohmann about his tour company and the South Coast.

Q. How do your tours differ from other guided tours in Jamaica?

A. Our tours are not found on the agenda of any other tour company. We take guests to caves which are very beautiful, full of stalactites, but are generally unknown. We visit a house that Bob Marley lived in with his girlfriend Esther Anderson. We travel by boat to find deserted beaches where we have picnics. Or we go to see manatees in the swamps near Alligator Pond. The biggest difference is that we can make last-minute changes due to weather and tailor our tours to suit the preferences of our guests.

Q. What would you say to encourage travelers to get out and see more of Jamaica during their stay?

A. My guests go out a lot by themselves anyway. Bluefields is like Negril was 30 years ago, and crime is rare. If my guests want to go to tourist areas I give them the general advice to be very cautious if somebody talks to them. I try and encourage them to initiate conversation.

Q. Can you describe some of the eco-tourism and historic experiences on your tours that might appeal to adventure travelers?

A. By boat they can see dolphins, giant sea turtles, stingrays, barracudas and even sharks. The other day we saw a fish chasing and catching a sea snake. They can also pass the mangrove swamps, see pelicans diving for fish, watch man of war egrets and all the other seabirds. On land it is the crocodiles, and the beautiful landscapes of Jamaica with their individual character that appeals. Staying at our historic great house is an experience in itself. The setting gives an idea of how people lived in the old days. We have reopened the old kitchen with its historic fireplace, which we use for barbecues.

Q. What would you tell travelers awaits them by getting off the beaten path and enjoying historic properties such as Shafston Great House?

A. Well, visitors can experience the real Jamaica, they can enjoy nature, people and the historic atmosphere that they cannot enjoy in a all-inclusive lock-up. They get great value for money.

SOUTH COAST ADVENTURE GUIDES

Treasure Beach

☎ 876-438-1311, 866-969-0989

www.southcoastadventures.com

This operator is part of the growing community tourism effort along the South Coast. Offering both environmentally and socially conscious programs, these tours are aimed at physically active travelers looking to get out and discover the hidden Jamaica. Offerings include multi-day trips with kayaking, biking, and hiking to Black River, Alligator Pond, and Treasure Beach; these trips are full-guided and each day includes plenty

of interaction with local residents. These multi-day trips include guest house accommodations and beach camping. Guided day-trips are also available by kayak or bike; all equipment is included.

SOUTH COAST SAFARI LTD
Black River
☎ 876-965-2513, fax 876-965-2086
Tour times: 9 and 11 am, 12:30, 2 and 3:30 pm daily
This excellent tour company runs a boat tour six miles up the Black River for a chance to see crocodiles as well as rural life. There's also an excursion to the remote YS Falls. On this tour you'll have the opportunity to spot some of the 100 species of birds that have been identified on the Black River as well as vegetation such as mangrove, thatch palms and royal palms. The tour takes 1½ hours and includes a buffet lunch as well as admission to the falls.

Sightseeing

■ Sightseeing

APPLETON ESTATE RUM TOUR
East of Maggoty, St. Elizabeth Parish
876-963-9215, fax 876-963-9218
www.jamaica-southcoast.com
Open daily
Admission

Rum is synonymous with Jamaica and the name Appleton is synonymous with Jamaican rum. Whether you're a connoisseur or not, a visit to this distillery is an interesting day-trip. Visitors begin with a look at the old ways of rum production, demonstrated by a donkey named Buzz. Guided tours take visitors past antique machinery used to crush the sugarcane, before heading into high-tech factories where the process takes place these days. Cool aging warehouses, where the spirits are stored in barrels once used to age bourbon, hold the rum as it ages anywhere from three to 30 years. Once the tour is completed, visitors go inside for a sample of the product, a taste which ranges from top-shelf liquor to wicked overproof, a favorite in Jamaica. A gift shop and excellent on-site restaurant that serves local fare round out the offerings at this attraction.

■ Parks

APPLE VALLEY PARK
Maggotty
☎ 876-963-9508, fax 876-963-9531
Hours: Tuesday, Thursday, Friday 10-5; weekends 11-5
Admission charged

Apple Valley Park consists of parkland, lake and forest surrounding a plantation great house. It offers camping, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, birding and musical entertainment in the evenings. A tractor-pulled tour of the nearby Black River gorge is one of the most popular attractions. Because the park is visited by locals and visitors, it is also a good spot to people-watch.

CASHOO OSTRICH PARK
Lacovia
☎ 876-966-2222
Hours: daily
Admission charged

This 100-acre working ostrich farm is situated on the Black River. You can boat on the river, fish in ponds or visit a medicinal herb garden.

■ Natural Delights

BAMBOO AVENUE
On A2 between Lacovia and Middle Quarters
Hours: Anytime
Free

Beyond Mandeville's borders, the road west (A2) winds along one of Jamaica's most scenic stretches, with a green tunnel of tall bamboo that arches over the roadway. Along the road's edge, vendors sell chilled young coconuts (jelly coconuts), cracking them with a quick machete chop to reveal the jelly inside.

LOVER'S LEAP
East of Treasure Beach off the main road
Hours: 9 am-6 pm, Monday through Thursday;
9 am-7 pm Friday, Saturday and Sunday
☎ 876-965-6634
Admission charged

This sheer 1,700-foot cliff drops straight into the sea and provides a beautiful view of the coastline. Travelers can enjoy a drink at the Toby Bar (try the Lovers' Punch) or dine at the Chardley Restaurant. A miniature farm demonstrates the dry farming technique used in this area. You can also arrange hiking excursions in the hills; call ahead to make arrangements.

A LOVER'S LEGEND

Legend has it that at this site a pair of lovers, escaped slaves, leapt to their deaths rather than face capture.

If you've ever visited Lover's Leap and heard the sad, romantic legend about the cliffs, you'll want to read *Lover's Leap*. Based on the Jamaican legend, the novel was written by Horane Smith, who was born near the South Coast attraction. Smith's website (www.geocities.com/SoHo/Atrium/5460) includes information on the novel as well as photos from the South Coast.

■ ADVENTURE TALKS

Interview with Lover's Leap author Horane Smith

Q. Tell us more about Lover's Leap and its legend

A. Lover's Leap is situated in southeastern St. Elizabeth, in a village called Yardley Chase (where I was born). The view from atop is awesome. To the east is about 50 miles of coastline winding into the distance, and to the west you see another 50 miles of the rugged coast worming away from you. Ahead of you is the deep blue sea. Tilt your chin and look three miles down below and you see the Santa Cruz Mountain range gradually descending until it seems to disappear into the sea. Frothy waves lash against reefs, stones and sand to form a feast for the eyes.

How did it get the name? As with any legend, there are many stories. The most widespread is that two slaves, after their secret romance had been discovered, jumped to their deaths from the cliff, rather than being separated or put to death. Another version says a plantation owner's daughter was in love with a slave and both jumped to their deaths. Still another version says a jealous plantation owner was in love with a slave, and they both jumped here.

What makes my novel intriguing ("a profound comment," according to British best-selling author John Prebble) is that it combines all three versions into one story. Reading it, the legend comes alive and the story sounds very credible.

Q. How did you use the legend as a basis for your novel?

A. I grew up hearing all these stories. With some knowledge of what life could be like back then, I tried to rescue a beautiful piece of Jamaica's history that I thought needed to be documented. My novel is the first written account and the added bonus is I was born right there. At a novel launching there last July (the same day the site was officially opened as a tourist attraction), the response from Jamaicans and visitors alike was overwhelming. I never dreamed

of such a reaction and that goes to show that the legend in novel form was long overdue.

Q. It seems that Lover's Leap is often overlooked by visitors. Do you think the South Coast itself is sometimes forgotten by travelers who mostly hear about North Coast destinations?

A. The theme I use in promoting the novel is "A Legend Has Come Alive." Why? For decades, Lover's Leap was just a playground for kids (like myself) and one would see an occasional visitor stopping by and gasping at the stunningly beautiful scene. A community center was erected in the 1960s and that's all. Then, in the 70s, the Jamaica Tourist Board launched a campaign called "Discover Jamaica," which featured many of our hidden beauty and historical spots. Lover's Leap was one of them.

Several years after that the government leased the entire site, redesigned the community center, erected a lighthouse and started to promote Lover's Leap as part of a new thrust to develop South Coast tourism. There is now a museum, restaurant, gift shop and tour facilities. The South Coast is now undergoing a transformation. I believe the area is now coming into the limelight with attractions like Lover's Leap.

Q. What special attributes does the South Coast and especially the Lover's Leap region have that might appeal to adventure travelers?

A. It's unspoiled and it's all about nature. There are no skyscrapers, and it's not a concrete jungle but an area of lush forests (especially at the Lover's Leap coastline, which is essentially untouched). You have the YS Falls, north of Lover's Leap, which can be compared to the famous Dunn's River Falls and is clean and pure. To the west is Treasure Beach on the Great Pedro Plains, where the sand is brown and beautiful. About 10 miles from there, you can journey (on the Swamp Safari Tour) up Jamaica's longest river, the Black River, to watch crocodiles in their natural habitat. You'll also observe mangroves and some plants and birds you will find only here. Further east, the hilly town of Mandeville is also known for its bird watching, and just a few miles from there you can visit the Milk River Mineral Bath and Spa, reputed to have therapeutic properties. There is also the famous Bamboo Avenue near YS Falls, another nature lover's stop.

Q. What special attributes does the region have that make it appeal to romantic travelers?

A. I got an recently from a young couple in Argentina who wanted to visit Lover's Leap as their romantic hideaway. The name of the place, the setting, its history are ideal for this. Treasure Beach is another near-perfect hideaway – it's quiet, serene and allows as

much privacy as any romantic couple could want. Mandeville and Milk River Spa also offer something special, as does gorgeous YS Falls, which isn't crowded like Dunn's River.

Most tours to these areas can be done from Treasure Beach Hotel. In the neighboring parish of Westmoreland, the Bluefields Beach (white sand) stretches for a mile and has many secluded spots for the romantic visitor. The huge Sandals chain of hotels has plans to build a hotel at Bluefields, a beautiful area. The biggest asset of the South Coast is that it's not crowded or fast-moving like the North Coast. It's rather laid back, more relaxing, private and offers nature in all its glory.

MILK RIVER MINERAL SPA
Milk River at Clarendon (22 miles from Mandeville)
☎ 876-924-9544
Hours: 7 am-7 pm daily
Admission charged

Take a soak in natural waters whose high levels of radioactivity soothe aches and pains. The radioactivity here is higher than any other spa in the world, and 54 times more radioactive than the waters of Baden-Baden. The waters are a constant temperature of 92□.

YS FALLS
☎ 876-634-2454, fax 876-965-2076
ysfalls@cwjamaica.com
Open daily
Admission charged

Negril vacationers looking to get away from the sun-loving crowds for a while often take a day trip to YS Falls on the South Coast. These spectacular waterfalls cascade in steps through tropical forest. As spectacular (and far less crowded) as Dunn's River Falls, YS has remained untouched by hassling vendors and long lines. At the top, swimmers enjoy clear waters under a canopy of ferns. "We try to keep this as private and natural as possible," says spokesperson Simon Browne.

WHY YS?

Why is this falls named YS? The shortest place name in Jamaica has been long debated. Some believe it comes the Gaelic word "wyess" (winding or twisting). Others say the name comes from a combination of the initials of the land's 1684 owners: John Yates and Lt. Col. Richard Scott.

The land has a long history. The property went into bankruptcy and was held by the Encumbered Estates Court in London for some time. The

great-uncle of the present owners traveled to London in 1887 to purchase a property in St. Ann; once he arrived he learned it had already been sold and so he purchased YS. For years, the 8,000-acre farm grew sugarcane, raised cattle and sold logwood trees to Holland, where they were used for making dye. Today there are still some logwood trees along the farm's fence lines.

The farm covers about 2,500 acres and raises Jamaica Red Poll cattle and thoroughbred racehorses; you'll also see many papayas grown on the plantation for export.

■ Coffee Factory Tour

HIGH MOUNTAIN COFFEE FACTORY
☎ 876-963-4211
Open Monday through Friday; Admission charged

This coffee originates on nearby plantations and is produced here at the factory. Tours can be arranged and guests can stop by the gift shop for a sample taste. The visit isn't terribly interesting – the factory is, well, a factory – but it has a good gift shop selling High Mountain products.

Adventures

■ Adventures on Foot

Hiking

APPLE VALLEY PARK
Maggotty
☎ 876-963-9508; fax 876-963-9531
Hours: Monday, Thursday, Friday, 10-5; weekends, 11-5; Admission

Just west of the Appleton Estate, this park offers quiet hikes as well as fishing and canoeing. It's closed on Tuesday and Wednesday.

MAYFIELD FALLS & MINERAL SPRING
Whitehall
☎ 876-971-6580, fax 876-971-2481
www.mayfieldfalls.com, info@mayfieldfalls.com
Hours: 9-6 daily; Admission

You can take a guided hike to these secluded falls. Bring a bathing suit as well as some money for lunch.

Other hikes in the Mandeville area can be arranged through **Countrystyle Community Experience** (☎ 876-962-7758), or through **Perth Great House** (☎ 876-9962-2822).

Golf

MANCHESTER COUNTRY CLUB
Caledonia Road at Ward Avenue, near central Mandeville
☎ 876-962-2403

This club has the oldest course in Jamaica, one of the oldest in the entire Caribbean. At an elevation of over 2,000 feet, it enjoys much cooler temperatures than the courses found along the coast. Nine greens, 18 tee boxes.

Massage Treatments

MASSAGE & HEALING BODYWORK
Calabash Bay, Treasure Beach
☎ 876-965-0583
doctorlee85@hotmail.com

For repeat visitors to Treasure Beach (where some properties report as many as 80% of visitors are repeaters), Joshua Lee Stein is a well-known name. With 20 years of experience in the US and Jamaica, this longtime masseur has a massage hut at Jake's but also makes "house calls," offering massages in your hotel or guest room. If you've seen Lonely Planet's excellent video on Jamaica, you've seen Joshua Lee Stein.

Tennis

MANCHESTER COUNTRY CLUB
Caledonia Road at Ward Avenue, Mandeville, ☎ 876-962-2403

The country club opens its tennis courts to guests of the many small properties in the area that don't have their own facilities.

■ Adventures on Water

Beaches

- **Treasure Beach** is a great place for a quiet walk – you won't see the crowds of Negril or Montego Bay along this remote stretch. If you want to swim or snorkel, plan your visit for the morning hours when the sea is at its calmest. These waters can have an undertow and strong currents.

■ Adventures on Horseback

PARADISE PARK
Savannah-La-Mar
☎ 876-955-2675
Open daily
Admission charged

This farm offers horseback rides for most ages. Call ahead to discuss specifics. Be sure to bring your bathing suit for a cool dip afterwards!

PERTH GREAT HOUSE
Mandeville
☎ 876-962-2822
Open daily

This 18th-century plantation offers rides on the grounds of the estate. A quiet place.

■ Eco-Travel

ALLIGATOR HOLE
Near Alligator Pond, south of Mandeville
Hours: daily
Free

This small nature park has manatees and crocodiles. There's a small visitors center here with information on the special residents, but there's no guarantee that you will spot the creatures. The best time of day to see the shy manatees is late afternoon.

MARSHALL'S PEN
Mandeville
☎ 876-963-8569, 904-5454 or 962-7890
Open daily
Admission charged

Nature lovers flock to Mandeville, and a top birding spot is Marshall's Pen, operated by ornithologist Robert Sutton. Tours are conducted by Sutton and are by appointment only. Nearly 100 species have been recorded on this cattle farm and around its great houses. Of the 25 bird species endemic to Jamaica, all but two are found in the Marshall's Pen area.

Shopping

Folks don't come to Mandeville to shop. We did find a very interesting store during our stay, however. The **S.W.A. Craft Centre**, sponsored by the Soroptimists and the Women's Auxiliary of the Mandeville Parish Church, features the crafts of local young women. This short-term work provides assistance to unemployed young women, who work at the center sewing, crocheting, embroidering and preparing pastries. Located just off Caledonia Avenue, the motto of the shop is "God gives birds their food, but they must fly for it."

Where to Stay

PRICE CHART
Note that prices, unless otherwise noted, are in US dollars.
ACCOMMODATIONS Prices are per room, based on double occupancy. In the case of all-inclusive properties, prices are per person.
$ = up to $50 per day
$$ = $51 to $100 per day
$$$ = $101 to $175 per day
$$$$ = over $175 per day

■ Hotels, Villas and B&Bs

At press time, a new South Coast resort is under construction: Sandals Whitehouse. This will be the first "big name" resort in a region now filled with small, one-of-a-kind properties.

THE ASTRA COUNTRY INN AND RESTAURANT
62 Ward Avenue, Box 60
☎ 876-962-7758 or 962-3725, fax 876-962-1461
www.access-ja.com/countrystyle
$-$$

Astra offers 20 guest rooms, each with air conditioning and some with kitchenettes. We enjoyed a stay in the housekeeping suite, complete with bedroom, living room with convertible couch, and full kitchen. This isn't the suite of a North Coast resort, but for the money and hospitality here, it can't be beat. Operated by Diana McIntyre-Pike. She'll point the way

for guests – whether you're looking for a remote bird watching site, a rum shop for a game of dominos, or dinner with local residents.

FLEUR FLATS RESORTS
10 Coke Drive
PO Box 485
☎ 876-962-1053, fax 876-905-3429; reservations ☎ 305-252-0873
$-$$
There's nothing fancy about Fleur Flats, but if you're interested in an extended stay in the Mandeville area, this is a good choice. The furnished two-bedroom apartments come with the comforts of home and maid service is available.

HOTEL VILLA BELLA
Christiana
☎ 876-964-2243, fax 876-964-2765
http://jamaica-southcoast.com/villabella, villabella@cwjamaica.com
$$
This bed and breakfast is in the community of Christiana, 13 miles from Mandeville. Perched at 3,000 feet above sea level, it has the feel of a country inn. There are 18 rooms in the two-story property, which also includes six acres of gardens, a reading room, television lounge, the Nasturium Room restaurant, cocktail lounge, outdoor garden terrace, gift shop and, on request, high tea.

INVERCAULD GREAT HOUSE AND HOTEL
PO Box 12, Black River PO, St. Elizabeth
☎ 876-965-2750 or 968-1053, fax 876-965-2751
www.invercauldgreathouse.com
$$
This Georgian-style hotel has 52 air-conditioned rooms and suites with private bathrooms and balconies. This great house was built over a century ago by a Scottish businessman, and only recently became a hotel. Dr. Trevor Hamilton, an international businessman born in the area, converted the home into a hotel for visitors looking to enjoy the South Coast. Amenities include a restaurant, cocktail bar, swimming pool, tennis, disco, gift shop and tour desk. Active travelers will also find bicycles, tours to cultural and ecological attractions and aerobics.

JAKE'S VILLAGE
Treasure Beach
☎ 876-965-0635, fax 876-965-0552; reservations ☎ 800-OUTPOST
www.islandoutpost.com, jakes@cwjamaica.com
$$$-$$$$
In the past few years, Jake's has almost become synonymous with Treasure Beach and, while small, is the best-known property on the South

Coast. Part of the Island Outpost chain owned by Island Records founder Chris Blackwell, Jake's is a unique property, a place for those really looking to get away from it all and into a relaxed rhythm with the sea.

Beach kitsch best describes the decor of the resort's eight guest units, each in pale shades of ochre, blue, pink and lavender with tin roofs. Five single cottages and two two-bedroom cottages make up the offerings, along with Abalone, a two-story, three-bedroom guest villa built in the style of a miniature Moroccan palace with terra-cotta walls. Each of the guest rooms at Jake's is filled with rustic local furniture: cast iron beds and platform beds covered with a veil of mosquito netting. Each room has a private bathroom and outdoor shower. Rooms are not air conditioned, but they do have ceiling fans.

BREDS

The co-owner of Jake's, Jason Henzell, is also involved in an important community program on the South Coast called Breds. Established by Henzell and Peace Corps volunteer Aaron Laufer in 1998, Breds (short for Brethren, a term often used by local residents to greet each other) is a non-profit association that promotes education, sports, cultural heritage, and environmental awareness.

The projects Breds has worked include the construction of 30 local houses in the Treasure Beach community, hosting of 14 New York City doctors to train local volunteers to be first responders, donation of fishing boats to needy residents, the completion of an expansion to the local primary school, adding a computer lab and library, and more.

For more on this program, which is funded through direct contributions and fundraising efforts, contact Breds - The Treasure Beach Foundation, Calabash Bay P.A., Treasure Beach, St. Elizabeth, Jamaica; ☎ 876-965-3000, fax 876-965-0552.

MANDEVILLE HOTEL
4 Hotel Street, Box 78, Mandeville
☎ 876-962-2460, fax 876-962-0700
$$

The Mandeville offers a delightful blend of traditional Jamaican elegance with modern comfort and convenience. Just steps from the downtown square, the hotel sits on the site of one of Mandeville's first buildings, a structure used as an officers quarters and mess in a former hill station. In 1875 the site became the Waverley Hotel, later changing to the Brooks

Hotel, before finally becoming the Mandeville Hotel. It's operated by Ceceline McIntyre, and has a warm and charming atmosphere.

There are 46 units, including 17 housekeeping suites with one, two or three bedrooms. The hotel has a nice pool adjacent to the restaurant.

SHAFSTON GREATHOUSE
Bluefields
☎ 876-869-9212
mail@shafston.com, www.shafston.com
$$

This great house has been operating as a hotel since 1992. Located 1½ miles from Bluefields, the home offers single and double rooms with breakfast, lunch (or a beach transfer) and dinner. Camping is also available. Right behind the great house hikers can enjoy a trail to the communities of Rosebank and Content.

SUNSET RESORT HOTEL
Calabash Bay, Treasure Beach
☎ 800-786-8452, 876-965-0143, Fax 876-965-0555
www.sunsetresort.com
$$$-$$$$

Located next door to Jake's, this relaxed resort welcomes couples, families, and singles. Presently 12 rooms, at press time the resort was planning an expansion to include 24 guest rooms. Each room is unique and oversized and many rooms here are enjoyed by visitors with multi-week vacations, especially during the winter months. The resort's Paradise Suite has a full-sized living room and kitchen, a favorite with long-term vacationers. Visitors can walk to Calabash Bay and purchase lobster, red snapper, and parrotfish from local fishermen.

Rooms include air-conditioning, satellite TV, and access to a sandy beach (a large freshwater pool also cools guests). Visitors can take their meals at the on-site restaurant or have food delivered to their rooms when they're not off property exploring the region.

TREASURE BEACH HOTEL
Treasure Beach
☎ 876-965-0110, fax 876-965-2544; reservations ☎ 800-330-8272
www.treasurebeachjamaica.com
$$$

This quiet hotel offers air-conditioned rooms right on the beach. It's also home to the Yabba Restaurant and near many attractions, such as Lover's Leap. Each of the rooms has a ceiling fan and private verandah. A pool is set in a grove of tall coconut palms.

Where to Eat

PRICE CHART
Note that prices, unless otherwise noted, are in US dollars.
RESTAURANTS Restaurant prices indicate the price of a meal, drink and gratuity for one person.
$ = up to $15 per person
$$ = $15 to $30 per person
$$$ = $30 to $45 per person
$$$$ = over $45 per person

■ Asian Restaurants

THE NASTURTIUM ROOM
Hotel Villa Bella, Christiana
☎ 876-964-2243
$$$

The Nasturtium Room is open 7 am to 10 pm daily and features a variety of dishes, including chicken Szhechuan, lobster fettucine, shrimp Creole and T-bone steak. The ambience, like that of the inn itself, is a throwback to a bygone era when visitors expected to be entertained in style. Furnishings and service are pleasingly old-fashioned and gracious. High tea is served at 4:30 pm.

■ Bars

THE MANCHESTER ARMS PUB AND RESTAURANT
Mandeville Hotel, 4 Hotel Street
☎ 876-962-2460
$$
This bar resembles a traditional English pub, a dark, cool place that's an excellent spot to meet other travelers and enjoy a cool beer.

■ Caribbean Cuisine

BLOOMFIELD GREAT HOUSE
8 Perth Road
☎ 876-962-7130 or 962-7192
$$$-$$$$

International-Caribbean cuisine is the order of the day at Mandeville's finest restaurant. Once Bill Laurie's Steakhouse, this property has reopened and undergone an elegant refurbishment. Guests can dine on an open-air verandah, which offers a spectacular view of the Mandeville lights at night, or in the antiques-filled main dining room. Entrées include filet mignon with roasted garlic guava sauce; beef Wellington; seafood kebab; shrimp Creole; and grilled pork chops stuffed with tropical fruits, served with plum sauce.

Don't miss the bar, which is open daily and affords a great view of the city. It's an all-wood affair reminiscent of a century-old pub. Australian and Chilean wines are featured.

■ Jamaican Restaurants

THE ASTRA COUNTRY INN AND RESTAURANT
62 Ward Avenue
☎ 876-962-7758 or 962-3725
$$
The restaurant is just past the inn's lobby. Like the hotel itself, it's clean and simple, although there's nothing simple about the food here. These are traditional Jamaican dishes such as jerk chicken, salad with peanut dressing, and an unbeatable rice and peas.

JAKE'S VILLAGE
Treasure Beach
☎ 876-965-0635
$$$
Jake's is an open-air restaurant serving ackee and saltfish, conch salad, pumpkin soup and steamed fresh fish.

THE MANCHESTER ARMS PUB AND RESTAURANT
Mandeville Hotel, 4 Hotel Street
☎ 876-962-2460
$
See listing above.

YABBA RESTAURANT
Treasure Beach Hotel, Treasure Beach
☎ 876-965-2305
$$
Yabba offers Jamaican cuisine, including fish and lobster, steaks, jerk chicken and lamb.

■ ■ ■

Kingston

Introduction

We landed at Kingston's Norman Manley International Airport long after dark. The city was celebrating Friday night in its traditional manner; the "Friday Night Jam" filled the streets with people glad the work week was over. The aromas from corner barbecues wafted through the air; reggae blasted from a radio on another corner.

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We were in Kingston. But not for long.

Our ride was taking us out of the city and up the Blue Mountains to Strawberry Hill. For the next hour, we wound our way through the city streets that we'd return to in later days, finally making our way out of the humidity and crowds and into the hills. The air grew cooler as we climbed, moving slowly back and forth on the switchback road. Finally, we were there. A pale glow lit the main building and restaurant, around the property we could see the small cottages outlined in dim light. But the real sight was from the restaurant itself. From here, we could see the lights of Kingston in the distance, far below us. The city was still partying down there, but here all was quiet as most visitors went to bed early, ready to rise the next morning to a foggy sunrise and a forest draped in quiet mist. We'd be bird watching the next day.

It was time for our Friday Night Jam to end, not to reggae or dancehall music, but to the sound of night frogs and insects in the nearby forest.

The capital city of Kingston lies on the south shore. This metropolitan area of over 800,000 residents is visited primarily by business travelers. Within this sprawling metropolis, however, beats the true heart of Jamaica. Travelers interested in the culture and history that define this island nation should make time for a visit to Kingston, the largest English-speaking city.

Kingston is not an easy city to love. Its big, brash and boisterous. Crime is a major problem, so severe that even some taxi drivers won't venture into the downtown region (more on that later). Life spills out from storefronts and homes onto the streets, filling the sidewalks and every inch of avail-

able space. Goats roam the downtown area, sidewalk vendors peddle all type of merchandise from carts and tables, pedestrians are everywhere.

Kingston dates back to 1692. The city is built along the harbor, stretching from the Blue Mountains in the east to the boundaries of Spanish Town in the west. Kingston is not for everyone. It does not offer a relaxing, fun-in-the-sun vacation. Head to the North Coast resort communities for that type of getaway. Instead, if you've had a few dates with Jamaica and you're ready to visit her parents, then it's time to head to Kingston. Things aren't always pretty here, but its a necessary part of the experience.

CRIME ALERT

Kingston's crime statistics are legendary. Although not directed specifically at tourists, crime of all types does occur on a regular basis in the bustling city. Be on your guard. The city is a conglomeration of communities and neighborhoods with invisible boundaries that are very clear to those who live here, but may not be obvious to the casual visitor.

Just which sections should you avoid? The worst regions are west and south of the city. Arriving from Spanish Town, the neighborhoods of **Six Miles** and **Riverton City** are some of the city's worst. South along the waterfront, Spanish Town Road skirts through the **downtown**, a high-crime district many Kingstonians will not visit, day or night.

The commercial center of Kingston sits along the waterfront. Here, goods come and go from around the world. Near the Jamaica Conference Centre, the waterfront takes on a pedestrian look, as people get out to enjoy the sunshine, to share conversation, and to buy local foods from vendors.

Look out across the waters and you'll see a peninsula. This is where **Norman Manley International Airport** is located. Beyond the airport lies the fishing village of **Port Royal**, once one of the greatest cities in the Caribbean. Nicknamed "the wickedest city in Christendom," Port Royal was a hangout for the pirates of the Caribbean. All that rollicking fun came to a screeching halt on June 7, 1692, when a violent earthquake shook the region and pummeled Port Royal into the sea. Archaeologists have recovered artifacts from the scandalous community and today shoppers can buy reproductions of Port Royal pewter plates and cups from Things Jamaican.

PORT ROYAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The Port Royal Development Company has undertaken the project of reconstructing this sunken city and making Kingston a major port of call for cruise ships. Along with the construction of a cruise ship pier, plans call for the restoration of the Naval Hospital, Fort Charles and the Naval Dockyards buildings, along with adding museums, shops and sidewalk cafés. The renovation of Port Royal would create an historic triangle formed with Kingston and Spanish Town. For more details, check out www.portroyal-jamaica.com.

For today, however, Port Royal is just a small fishing village. If you're here at lunch, eat at Gloria's fish shack, where you can sit on picnic tables under the awning and enjoy fish: escovitch, fried or steamed.

Getting Around

Another reminder about crime. "I don't go downtown," one taxi driver told us, a lifelong Kingstonian. Another driver warned us that if the car broke down in this area, there would be nothing left of it by the time we returned with a mechanic.

Farther east, the business section of downtown is home to many international corporations, consulate offices, banks, insurance companies, and the world-class **Jamaica Convention Centre**. This is the home of the International Seabed Authority, the UN body that creates all laws for the world's seas. This modern center lies along the lovely waterfront on Ocean Boulevard, where parks overlook the harbor and you can enjoy an afternoon with the locals, dining on street food and absorbing the atmosphere. This area is generally safe during weekday business hours, but when 5 o'clock rolls around it takes on the feeling of a ghost town as business people head back up into the safety of the hills.

Most Kingston travelers spend their time in **New Kingston**, north of the downtown area. Bounded by Old Hope Road on the east side and Half Way Tree Road (which changes to Constant Spring Road) on the west, the main thoroughfare through New Kingston is **Hope Road**. Here you'll find the modern convention hotels, restaurants and nightclubs preferred by most of the city's visitors.

North of New Kingston lies the city's most beautiful area. Magnificent homes grace the **Constant Springs** neighborhood, which offers stunning vistas, especially in the early evening when you can watch the city

lights come out. East of Kingston, the views are even more spectacular, both day and night. Follow Hope Road past the University of the West Indies as it becomes Gordon Town Road and curls its way up into the **Blue Mountains**.

> **AUTHORS' TIP:** *Hire a good driver for this stretch of Colorado Rockies-type road. Drop-offs are sheer and there are no guardrails!*

Wherever you travel in Kingston you'll find cuisine from around the globe. This wealth of dining options is partly due to the 35 international embassies and consulates based right in this city, the largest number found in the Caribbean.

■ Car Rentals

Think twice about renting a car here. Along with the usual Jamaica traffic problems (which range from goats in the road to king-size potholes), you'll be faced with a potential crime problem. At press time the city was experiencing severe problems with gangs. Murder rates have been on the rise, although tourists are not generally singled out. Please reread the warning above regarding which sections of town to avoid, and check with your hotel staff for current problem areas. With all that said, there are several car rental agencies in town.

CAR RENTAL AGENCIES	
Budget Car Rental	☎ 876-924-8762 or 924-8626 (Norman Manley Airport)
Econocar Rentals	☎ 876-927-6761 (Lady Musgrave Road)
Fiesta Car Rentals	☎ 876-926-0133 (Waterloo Road)
Island Car Rentals	☎ 876-926-5991 (17 Antigua Avenue)

■ Taxis

The best transportation option within Kingston is a taxi. You can catch one at any hotel, the airports and in most shopping areas. Travelers should be careful to only use licensed taxis; these have a red license plate that indicates the taxi is a Public Passenger Vehicle (PPV). Taxi rates vary but are figured by car, not by passenger. Fares average about US $5-7 for 10 miles.

Few of Jamaica's taxis are metered. If you accept a driver's offer of his services as a tour guide, be sure to agree on a price before the vehicle is put into gear.

■ Guided Tours

Taxi tours are an excellent way to see the city. You can set your own itinerary and travel at your own pace. **Sun Island Tours and Limousine Service** (☎ 876-901-8826) offers guided tours.

Another option is a guided group tour. You'll find several tours for different interests.

TOURING SOCIETY OF JAMAICA
Strawberry Hill
☎ 876-975-7158 or 876-944-8400
lyndaleeburks@yahoo.com or lyndalee@islandoutpost.com

The Touring Society of Jamaica is a unique operator. Since 1991 it has offered unusual tours that give an insider's view of the island. Itineraries include arts, architecture, music, gardens, natural history and epicurean delights. They are designed for individual interests and might include such activities as an overnight trip to the Blue Mountains to sample Jamaica's best coffee, an afternoon trip to Spanish Bridge in the Ocho Rios countryside, or a week-long quest for Jamaica's arts and crafts.

The society is especially known for its mountain hikes into the surrounding Blue Mountains. Tours include:

- **Old Tavern Blue Mountain Coffee Estate**. This excursion to one of the top coffee plantations on the island includes a picnic lunch.
- **The Fairy Glade Trail and Newcastle**. This hike takes travelers through several ecosystems, ending the day with sunset at the Gap Café.
- **National Gallery and Spanish Town**. History and art buffs enjoy this tour into the city and the nearby historic community of Spanish Town.
- **Kingston Nightlife**. This is a personalized tour of the nightlife for which Kingston is known.

Recently we interviewed Lynda Lee Burks about these special tours.

■ ADVENTURE TALKS
Interview with the Touring Society of Jamaica

Q. How are the tours offered by the Touring Society of Jamaica different from other tours offered on the island?

A. My tours are private, customized to suit my client's interests. I specialize in unique, off-the-beaten-track destinations and introduce people to interesting local personalities.

Q. What surprises await visitors in the island's interior?

A. The interior of the island is still very much unspoiled; you will see people move to a differant sense of time. A simple country drive can be both pleasurable and eye-opening. The landscape is stunning both naturally and the architecturally. Jamaica's architecture has a lot to say about the island's social history.

Q. Can you describe the Fairy Glade Trail?

A. The Fairy Glade Trail is in the area above Newcastle. It starts across from The Gap Café (near Hardwar Gap) and finishes at the old British army base (very interesting architecturally), now home of the Jamaica Defense Force. It's about a three-hour hike – some of it climbing – but anyone in a reasonable state of fitness can make it. It goes through the rain forest under a thick canopy of vegetation and can be very wet. The variety of ferns is tremendous. Prehistoric tree ferns are abundant and the bromiliads are all larger than you ever imagined they could be. What you know as a small house plant is suddenly in front of you the size of a tree.

Good shoes are important on this hike and a water-repellent jacket with a hood is often useful.

Q. What other sights should travelers be sure to visit?

A. In the Blue Mountains, they should visit a coffee farm (there are a couple of different ones I take people to). I love introducing people to Alex Twyman and The Old Tavern Blue Mountain Coffee Estate. Alex grows and processes the best Blue Mountain coffee on the island. He has an infectious passion for the bean and teaching people about how coffee is grown and processed. The hike across his coffee estate is one of the most beautiful trails I know; I call it my *Sound of Music* hike, and the vistas are positively thrilling.

Q. What's the itinerary of your tours?

A. If I am carring people from Ocho Rios, we will leave by 8:30 am and travel over the mountain from Buff Bay, reaching The Old Tavern by 11 am. We'll pack a picnic lunch. Coming down the mountain, we'll stop at Strawberry Hill. You get a glimpse of Kingston as we pass through to find Junction Road, one of the most scenic roads in Jamaica. Castleton Gardens and the last big stand of Royal Palms can be seen on Junction Road. Estimated return to Ocho Rios is 6:30 pm. The full-day tour to Blue Mountains runs US $100-150 per person. Advance reservations and deposit are required to secure the date.

The Touring Society plans custom holidays and events in Jamaica and can best be contacted via at the above address.

SUN VENTURE
30 Balmoral Avenue, Kingston 10
☎ 876-960-6685, fax 876-929-7512
This tour company offers hikes in the Blue Mountains, including camping, as well as bird watching and caving in the Cockpit Country.

Sightseeing

■ Parks & Sanctuaries

BOON HALL OASIS
4 River Road
☎ 876-942-3064
Hours: daily 7-5; Free

This four-acre park offers picnicking, a plant nursery, waterfall and views of the hills of St. Andrews. There's a brunch offered here for JA $760.

GUARDSMAN'S SERENITY FISHING & WILDLIFE SANCTUARY
40 minutes east of Kingston via A1/A2 west
☎ 876-708-5515, fax 876-708-5522
serenitypark@cwjamaica.com
Open daily
Admission charged
A popular new stop with Kingston school groups, this sanctuary was established by the executive chairman of the Guardsman Group, a security company in Kingston. A visit to the site starts with a tractor ride through mango orchards and vegetable plots, then a visit to the animal collection, with exotic birds and a petting zoo. Food lovers will be interested in the sanctuary for another reason: local dishes are served for lunch and dinner in the restaurant. Curried goat, barbecue or jerked chicken, oxtail and other local dishes are available for US $8-10. You can even fish for red tilapia and have the restaurant clean and bag your catch for $4 per pound.

■ Museums

BOB MARLEY MUSEUM
56 Hope Road, Kingston
☎ 876-927-9152, fax 876-978-4906
Hours: Monday-Saturday 9:30-4
www.bobmarley-foundation.com/museum.html
Admission charged
Marley fans shouldn't miss this shrine to the legendary reggae superstar, housed in what was his home. A visit here includes a tour and a movie

about Marley's life. The museum is a must for Marley fans, although others may want to skip it.

INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA
12 East Street
☎ 876-922-0620, fax 876-922-1147
www.instituteof jamaica.org.jm
Hours: Monday through Thursday, 9-4:30
Free

This natural history museum and library covers the island's rich history from its days as a home for the Arawak Indians to modern times.

■ Great House

DEVON HOUSE
26 Hope Road, New Kingston
☎ 876-929-6602
Hours: 9 am-5 pm, Tuesday through Saturday
Admission charged

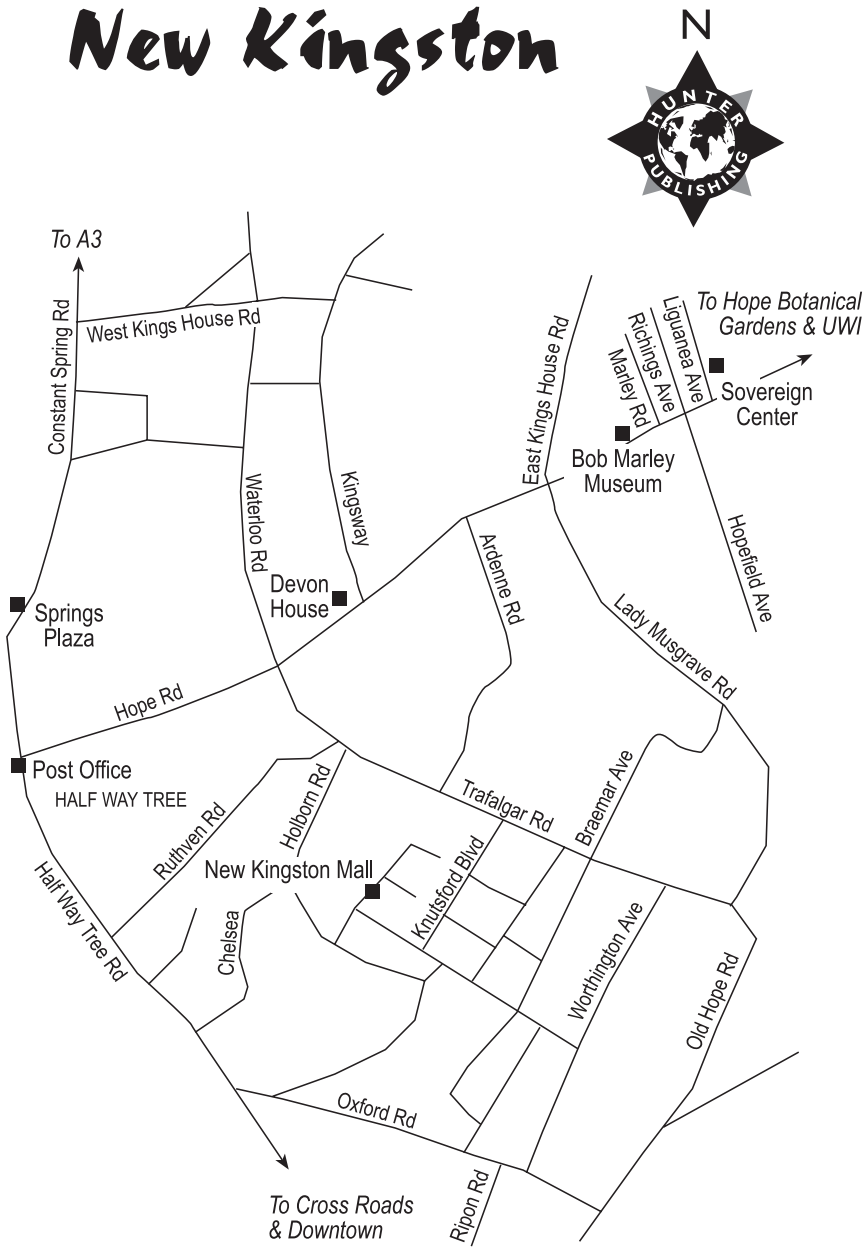
This restored great house is in the heart of New Kingston, near the Terra Nova Hotel. The home was built in 1889 for £10,000 by a Venezuelan gold millionaire, whose family lived here until the 1920s.

Today, the historic structure is filled with antiques and antique reproductions from the 1880s (done by Things Jamaican). Tours, given every 15 minutes, include a look at the master bedroom, the sewing room, with an illegal gambling room upstairs (the stairs are hidden in the ceiling), a sunny ballroom with relief ceiling, original chandelier and an English piano.

■ Art Gallery

NATIONAL ART GALLERY
Roy West Building, Kingston Mall
☎ 876-922-8540
Hours: 11-4:30 weekdays only
Admission charged

This downtown art gallery contains some real treasures. The best-known artists represented here are Edna Manley (an accomplished artist and wife of the former prime minister, Norman Manley) and Kapo, whose religious images have received a lot of attention.



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NOT TO SCALE

■ Spa

ROCKFORD MINERAL BATHS
A-1 east of Kingston
☎ 876-938-5055
Hours: daily, 6:30 am-6 pm
Admission charged

These natural springs emerged after the earthquake of 1907. Today you can soak in a whirlpool tub fed by the mineral waters; call ahead to book the baths.

■ Other Sites

JAMAICA CONVENTION CENTRE
Duke Street
☎ 876-922-9160
Admission for tours

This is well worth a peek, even if you just drive by. The center is one of the Caribbean's leading facilities for meetings that require simultaneous translation services due to its role as headquarters for the International Seabed Authority, an arm of the United Nations. It is capable of working with six languages: English, Spanish, French, Chinese, Russian and Arabic. Built to UN specifications, the building is located on the waterfront in downtown Kingston. Around-the-clock security protects the center, which includes a print shop, press area to accommodate up to 40 journalists, clinic, business services office, delegate lounges and a cafeteria with seating for up to 250 attendees.

WORLD'S END LTD
Gordon Town
Hours: 10 am-4 pm, Monday-Friday; 12-4 pm, Saturday and Saturday
☎ 876-977-5941 or 929-3564

Even non rum-drinkers will find this tour worthwhile, thanks to the beautiful location. World's End produces Sangster's Old Jamaican Liqueurs high in the Blue Mountains. Factory tours are followed by a taste of the potent and well-respected rum. World's End is also recommended for birders, who may spot Jamaica's national bird, the doctor bird.

Adventures

■ Adventures on Foot

Hiking

BLUE MOUNTAINS-JOHN CROW NATIONAL PARK
B1 to Newcastle is the main route.
No telephone, free
Hours: daily

At 300 square miles (193,260 acres), the park is filled with sites to challenge adventure travelers of all types – hikers, birders, mountain bikers. The country's second largest national park has three distinct areas: the Blue Mountains Peak (the highest mountain in Jamaica); the Clydesdale Forest Reserve (a wilderness filled with mahogany, eucalyptus, and blue mahoe); and the easily accessible Hollywell Recreational Park (see below).

One of the best ways to experience the park (which in many areas is so heavily forested you need a machete to hack your way through) is with a guide. We've listed several qualified guides in the *Guided Tours* section above.

HOLLYWELL RECREATIONAL PARK
Two miles from Newcastle
Hours: 9:30-6:30 daily
Free

Tucked high in the mountains, this park is a great place to escape from the heat. With great views, Hollywell offers picnicking and hiking.

Golf

CAYMANAS GOLF CLUB
☎ 876-922-3386, fax 876-922-3394

Caymanas was Jamaica's first major championship 18-hole course, dating from the 1950s. It was designed by Howard Watson and is six miles west of Kingston. A round of golf costs US $53; rentals are available. Facilities include a snack bar, carts and a pro shop.

CONSTANT SPRING
☎ 876-924-1610

This downtown course dates back to 1920, when it was designed by Scotsman Stanley Thompson, mentor of Robert Trent Jones. The short course

is a par 70, and a round costs US $35; rentals are available. There's a clubhouse, restaurant, bar and pro shop.

Tennis

Tennis players can hone their skills at several courts, including the **Crowne Plaza** (☎ 876-925-7676), **The Jamaica Pegasus** (☎ 876-926-3690), and the **Hilton New Kingston** (☎ 876-926-5430).

■ Adventures on Water

Beaches

Kingston's beaches are busy. There have been some crime problems on them in recent years, so we recommend caution. The Hellshire area, southwest of the city, has some of the best-known area beaches, including **Gunboat Beach** and **Fort Clarence**.

Lime Cay, south of the peninsula where Port Royal and the airport are located, can be reached by a boat from Morgan's Harbor and is very popular with picnickers. This small island is a favorite weekend getaway with Kingstonians. The cay has a nice beach and a fun atmosphere, with weekend cookouts and lots of local fun. Swimming is good. Boat rides out here can be arranged through Morgan's Harbour Hotel (☎ 876-967-8075).

Scuba Diving

With Kingston's many cultural offerings, its dive opportunities are sometimes overlooked. The area has a good variety of sites, though, ranging from wreck dives to reefs. **The Buccaneer Scuba Club**, ☎ 876- 967-8061, is the local operator. Sites include:

- ***Cayman Trader*.** This wreck is good for all levels of divers. At 33-55 feet, the merchant trade vessel is covered in sea life and nurse sharks are often seen.
- **The Edge.** At over 100 feet, this is an advanced dive. It offers excellent visibility and great photo opportunities.
- ***Texas* Wreck.** This US naval ship was sunk here in 1944. Today it's an advanced dive (over 100 feet), with lots of black coral.
- ***Wreck Reef*.** At 50-80 feet, this site has both natural and man-made attractions. Look for old cannons near the site.

■ Eco-Travel

CASTLETON BOTANICAL GARDENS
A3 north of Kingston
Hours: 9-5 daily
Free

These longtime gardens feature many native species, as well as some that have been introduced. For the price of a tip, you can enjoy a guided tour of the extensive collection; you'll also see plenty of birdlife here.

HOPE BOTANICAL GARDENS AND ZOO
Hope Road, next to the University of the West Indies Mona campus
☎ 876-927-1257
Open daily
Admission charged

This 50-acre getaway is the largest botanical garden in the West Indies. The small zoo features Caribbean wildlife. The site was originally the Hope Estate, founded by Richard Hope, an English army officer, in the mid-1600s. Featured exhibits include orchid gardens, cacti gardens and Palm Avenue, which displays sago palms. It's a pleasant spot to spend an hour or so.

ROYAL BOTANICAL GARDENS AT HOPE
Hope Road
☎ 876-927-1085
Hours: weekdays 10-5, weekends 10-5:30
Admission charged

These gardens were donated by the Hope family. Spanning 50 acres, the gardens are filled with tropical plants and trees, most labeled.

■ Cultural Excursions

Kingston is a good home base from which to enjoy day trips, short drives out of the city that can give you a peek at the rich history of this island.

Interesting Communities

PORT ROYAL
Follow Norman Manley Highway to the airport and continue as the road becomes Main Road, or take a ferry from downtown Kingston at Princess Street (call the Kingston JTB office for times).

Once a wild hedonistic pirates' den (Hedonism II and III weren't the first to fill those shoes on this island!), Port Antonio's rollicking fun came to a

halt on June 7, 1692, when a violent earthquake shook the region and pushed Port Royal into the sea. The city became the only sunken city in the Western hemisphere and has been nicknamed the "Pompeii of the Caribbean."

The top attraction is **Fort Charles** (☎ 876-967-8059, open daily 9-5, admission charged). Built in 1662, this is the oldest building in Port Royal and is from the days of British occupation. The remaining portion of the fort includes a maritime museum and Giddy House, tilted by an earthquake in 1907.

SPANISH TOWN

14 miles west of Kingston on A1

This was once Santiago de la Vega, the island's capital city under Spanish rule. Those early explorers came to Jamaica in search of precious metals and finally gave up the island to the English in 1655. Spanish Town is an excellent day trip for history buffs. Attractions include **Jamaican People's Museum of Crafts and Technology** (home of many vintage farm implements, musical instruments and pottery) and **St. James Cathedral** (St. Jago de la Vega), the oldest Anglican cathedral beyond England's borders. Built in 1523, the historic church is worth a peek and is open daily; admission is free. The cathedral is filled with memorials to former Jamaican governors; outside the chapel lie many historic graves dating back to Jamaica's earliest days.

FLAT BRIDGE

Located outside Kingston on the Rio Cobre

This bridge was built in the late 1700s by slaves. You'll see that there's no rail on the bridge – every time a rail has been added, the river rises and washes it out. Legend has it that two slaves were killed and their bodies added to the mortar; their ghosts are said to haunt the site.

■ ADVENTURE TALKS

Interview with James Samuels, President of the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association.

Q. What do travelers often overlook about Kingston?

A. Kingston has received a bad rap in the marketplace. We have the best meeting facility in Jamaica and the best hotel rooms. We always say not to downplay our resort properties, but because we deal daily with the business market that we are better equipped to deal with the meetings and conventions market.

Q. We understand that Kingston's Carnival is gaining popularity. Is it growing among travelers as well as residents?

A. We are very pleasantly surprised by the level of international traffic we see participating in Carnival. One great thing about Carnival in the Caribbean is that everyone gets involved. If you are in

Kingston, you are caught up in Carnival, it's that infectious. It's a very good time if you want to enjoy real Jamaican flavor.

Q. What else would you like travelers to know about Kingston?

A. Jamaican experiences run the gamut. On weekends in Kingston, all segments of society head to the water. Lime Cay and Maiden Cay get the boats. Visitors often don't spend enough time in Kingston. It's a shame because it has so much to offer.

■ Spectator Sports

Cricket

SABINA PARK
South Camp Road

This park is the island's test cricket center. For game times, call the Jamaica Cricket Association, ☎ 876-967-0322, or the Kingston Jamaica Tourist Board office, ☎ 876-929-9200.

Horseracing

CAYMANAS PARK RACE TRACK
Gregory Park
☎ 876-988-2523

The track is a favorite with locals and visitors who get their kicks from exciting horseraces. Races are held on Wednesdays, Saturdays and on public holidays, 12:30 to 6 pm.

Shopping

Because it sees fewer tourists than the resort areas, Kingston shopping is primarily aimed at residents. One area that tourists will find of interest, however, is **Devon House**. Surrounding the great house are numerous boutiques offering everything from Jamaican artwork to jerk sauces. **Things Jamaican** is one of the best stores if you're looking to take back a taste of Jamaica. This shop sells sauces, cookbooks and even pewterware that reproduces patterns recovered by archaeologists at Port Royal. A second Things Jamaican shop is at Norman Manley International Airport.

Pick up some last-minute coffee supplies at **The Coffee Mill**, which also sells teas and sauces. **Two Hampers and a Mule** is another excellent stop and offers local artwork, cookbooks and more.

Where to Stay

PRICE CHART
Note that prices, unless otherwise noted, are in US dollars.
ACCOMMODATIONS Prices are per room, based on double occupancy. In the case of all-inclusive properties, prices are per person.
$ = up to $50 per day
$$ = $51 to $100 per day
$$$ = $101 to $175 per day
$$$$ = over $175 per day

■ Hotels, Resorts & Inns

CHRISTAR VILLAS
99 Hope Road
☎ 876-978-8066, fax 876-978-8068
$$-$$$

This 32-room villa property has air-conditioned rooms, kitchen facilities, pool and fitness center. It's right in the heart of Kingston. The standard rooms offer a double bed, as well as a living area with TV, phone, kitchenette.

THE COURTLEIGH HOTEL AND SUITES
85 Knutsford Boulevard, New Kingston
☎ 876-929-9000, fax 876-926-7744
$$$

This 10-story hotel is a new addition in the business district, although the Courtleigh name has been familiar to Kingston visitors for many years. It was originally located a short distance from its present site. The 118-room property is aimed at business travelers, but most people will find its rooms comfortable. The family-owned hotel includes a restaurant, nightclub and also a fitness center.

CROWNE PLAZA KINGSTON
211 Constant Spring Road, New Kingston
☎ 876-925-7676, fax 876-925-5757; reservations ☎ 800-618-6534
$$$

This fairly new 105-room business hotel is perched in the hills just north of New Kingston in the neighborhood of Constant Spring. Many rooms have views of the city and guests have all the amenities common to

Crowne Plazas, such as a fitness center, satellite TV and tennis courts. The hotel includes a business floor; these rooms offer a fax machine, modem and other amenities not found in the standard rooms. Facilities include a pool, squash, massage, sauna and concierge service. Guests can enjoy indoor or outdoor dining at Isabella's for a great city view.

HILTON NEW KINGSTON
77 Knutsford Boulevard, New Kingston
☎ 876-926-5430, fax 876-7439; reservations ☎ 800-HILTONS
www.kingstonhilton.com, info@hiltonkingston.com
$$$
This hotel was formerly the Wyndham New Kingston and is located in the hotel section of New Kingston near Le Meridien and The Courtleigh. The 303-room property recently underwent a $15 million renovation. It now offers guests many facilities, including a health club, sauna, Olympic-size pool, tennis courts and more. This hotel is especially convenient for travelers using American Airlines; there's a service desk in the lobby so you can make changes, seating requests, etc. We used this service on our last trip to Kingston and found it very convenient.

THE JAMAICA PEGASUS
81 Knutsford Boulevard, New Kingston
☎ 876-926-3690, fax 876-929-5855
www.jamaicapegasus.com, jmpegasus@cwjamaica.com
$$$
The Pegasus is right in the heart of New Kingston, within walking distance of The Courtleigh and the Hilton Kingston Hotel. The 17-floor property has 350 guest rooms, each with balcony, satellite TV, hair dryer, safe, two direct dial phones and coffee maker. Upgraded rooms are found on the floors set aside for the Knutsford Club members, with separate check-in, afternoon snacks and upgraded amenities. The large, deep pool at the Pegasus lies just behind the property and offers a quiet afternoon getaway with scarcely any traffic noise. Tennis courts and jogging trails are also available.

MAYFAIR HOTEL
4 West Kings House
☎ 876-926-1610, fax 876-926-7741
$-$$
Adjoining the Governor General's residence, this 32-room hotel has air-conditioned rooms, restaurant and pool, and is near the business district. The hotel offers one-bedroom units as well as one- and two-bedroom suites; all suites have a TV, living room/dining room, and a kitchenette (maid service also included).

MORGAN'S HARBOUR
Port Royal
☎ 876-967-8030, fax 876-967-8073; reservations ☎ 800-528-9000
$$-$$$
This 45-room property is home to a marina (you can boat out to Lime Cay from here), restaurant, bar and large garden. Rooms are fairly basic but many do include a mini-refrigerator. This hotel offers snorkeling, harbor cruises, fishing, a dive shop and free airport shuttle.

STRAWBERRY HILL
New Castle Road, Irishtown
☎ 876-944-8400 or 800-OUTPOST, fax 876-944-8408
www.islandoutpost.com
$$$$
This sprawling mountainside resort is perched 3,100 feet above sea level, looking down on Kingston. The atmosphere here is pure nature. Jamaica's doctor bird, a hummingbird with an unbelievable plume tail, flits through the trees. A morning mist hangs over the mahogany trees. The sound of life in small neighboring villages drifts up from the surrounding valleys.

The resort is one of the Island Outpost properties owned by Chris Blackwell, founder of Island Records, record label of the late Bob Marley (he recuperated at this site after he was shot in 1976), as well as Melissa Manchester and Robert Palmer. Like other Island Outposts, it is exclusive and unique. There are 12 wooden villas, each filled with antique Jamaican decor. The villas look out on the Blue Mountains from bedrooms, living rooms and expansive porches. We spent part of our time just lazing about in an oversized hammock on our porch. Every room has electric mattress pads to warm up the bed on chilly evenings, mosquito-netted, four-poster mahogany beds, stocked kitchenettes, coffee makers, televisions, VCRs and even CD players with a full array of CDs (okay, some of them are Island Record productions, but they fit the tone of the place). Videos are available for loan.

In January 1998, Strawberry Hill opened a new Aveda Spa, with massage, hydrotherapy, facials and other body treatments. We enjoyed pedicures, manicures and a splendid facial. And, at the end of the day, guests can order spa cuisine or Jamaican dishes with a light touch in the resort restaurant.

The property has 40 acres of lawns and forests. The grounds were once part of one of the first coffee plantations in the Blue Mountains. Today over 350 species still grace these grounds, including some species first planted centuries ago such as *Juniperus, Virginiana, Eucalyptus Nicolae, Cedrela Odoratissimia* and *Mangifera Indica* (blackie mangoe).

■ ADVENTURE TALKS
Interview with Aveda Spa

Creator of Aveda, Horst Rechelbacher recently joined with Strawberry Hill owner Chris Blackwell to add the Aveda spa to this special resort.

Q. Why did Aveda choose to locate a spa at Strawberry Hill?

A. The hotel brought Aveda here. The hotel and Aveda have a common vision, to nurture people. We create a holistic environment. The rain is a very important aspect because it brings in energy.

Q. What type of traveler does the spa at Strawberry Hill attract?

A. I'd advise first-time spa goers to come to an intimate place like this that caters to the individual. Here, people are allowed to be themselves. There's no strict rule or dress code. The whole purpose of a spa is to let go. I've been to glamour spas and I feel very uncomfortable. This place is very special.

Q. What special aspects of Jamaica drew you to Strawberry Hill?

A. My personal interest is plant medicine and biological preservatives. Jamaica has an incredible greenhouse and is known throughout the world as a biological heaven of plant species. They exhale what we inhale. For us as a company, to be here and be part of this spa is an honor.

TERRA NOVA ALL-SUITE HOTEL
17 Waterloo Road, New Kingston
☎ 876-926-2211, fax 876-960-0279
www.terranovahotel.biz, info@terranovahotel.biz
$$$

Terra Nova is New Kingston at its very best: formal, traditional and oh-so Jamaican. Unlike the modern highrises also found in this business district, Terra Nova carries on the legacy of Old Jamaica with classic mahogany furniture, fine art and a wonderful atmosphere that tells you you're not staying in another chain hotel.

There are 35 guest rooms at this intimate property, which is a favorite with those who have been coming to Kingston for many years.

Where to Eat

PRICE CHART
Note that prices, unless otherwise noted, are in US dollars.
RESTAURANTS Restaurant prices indicate the price of a meal, drink and gratuity for one person.
$ = up to $15 per person
$$ = $15 to $30 per person
$$$ = $30 to $45 per person
$$$$ = over $45 per person

■ Asian Restaurants

ORCHID ROOM
Devon House, 26 Hope Road, New Kingston
☎ 876-968-2098
$$$

This dinner-only restaurant serves authentic Thai cuisine. Pad Thai, pepper steak, curried dishes, stir-fried chicken and satay fill the menu.

■ Continental Cuisine

BLUE MOUNTAIN INN
Gordon Town Road
☎ 876-927-1700 or 876-927-2606
$$$$

Reservations are required for this beautiful eatery half an hour out of Kingston in the misty Blue Mountains, tucked behind a bougainvillea-draped entrance. The menu features beef and seafood, all served in a classic English-inn atmosphere. White-glove service makes this a truly elegant evening. The restaurant is open for dinner only.

■ Ice Cream

I SCREAM
Devon House, 26 Hope Road, New Kingston
☎ 876-929-7028
$
We normally wouldn't put an ice cream parlor in a restaurant section, but I Scream doesn't serve up your typical dairy dessert. You can find grapenut, guava, mango, soursop and even Devon stout ice creams. Need we say more?

■ Jamaican Restaurants

GROG SHOPPE
Devon House, 26 Hope Road, New Kingston
☎ 876-929-7027
$-$$
This excellent restaurant offers both indoor and open-air seating in a pub-like setting. Just steps from Devon House itself, the restaurant menu includes pub lunches such as roast beef or corned tongue as well as escovitch fish or steamed fish in white wine, onions, tomatoes and herbs. Many Jamaican specialties are offered, including curried goat, ackee and saltfish, roast suckling pig, baked crab backs, curried chicken, jerked chicken and stuffed cho-cho.

HOT POT
2 Alamont Terrace, Kingston
☎ 876-929-3906
$-$$
This favorite local hangout serves three meals a day: Jamaican favorites such as ackee and codfish, rundown and escovitch fish. Wash it all down with fresh juices – tamarind, coconut water and, if you visit during the holiday season, sorrel. This popular place offers a real taste of Jamaican food and a genuine Jamaican atmosphere to match. Very casual.

IVOR GUEST HOUSE
Jacks Hill
☎ 876-978-3476 or 876-978-3479
$$-$$$
When you're ready for a break from continental or Jamaican food, this elegant restaurant serves Cantonese and Thai delights. Don't miss the dim sum on Sunday afternoons.

LA FRESCA BAR AND GRILL
Terra Nova Hotel, 17 Waterloo Road, New Kingston
☎ 876-926-2211
$$$$

We enjoyed an elegant dinner at La Fresca just days before Christmas one year. It was our last night in Jamaica, and we dined outside on the great house verandah. Local residents, decked in their holiday splendor, filled most tables. The restaurant and the hotel were lit by tiny white lights and the dinner was one we'll never forget.

Menu selections include peppered shrimp, grilled lobster tail, fish escovitch, fish soup, conch fritters and fried fish.

PEPPERS
31 Upper Waterloo Road, Kingston
☎ 876-969-2421
$-$$

Want to feel like a Kingstonian? Then do as the locals do and head to this casual restaurant, grab a picnic table, and order up some jerk and a Red Stripe. This is an open-air affair, completely casual. Specialties of the house include jerk chicken, jerk pork and jerk fish. Garlic crab and grilled lobster are other favorites. There are two bars here, as well as a dance floor. The site is a popular after-work place for Kingstonians, who come on Wednesday and Friday nights for seafood, Tuesday for wine and cheese accompanied by live country music, karaoke on Thursdays, and oldies tunes on Sunday evenings. Like the Hot Pot, we recommend this casual eatery for a real taste of Jamaican food and a real Jamaican atmosphere.

STRAWBERRY HILL
New Castle Road, Irishtown
☎ 876-944-8400, fax 876-944-8408
$$$

The open-air restaurant at Strawberry Hill serves a continental breakfast daily followed by lunch and dinner featuring new Jamaican cuisine. These innovative dishes are the creation of Jamaican-born Chef James Palmer. The Sunday brunch is a Kingston event; look for diners in their Sunday best. Dinner dishes include blackened sirloin steak with red onion marmalade; grilled jumbo shrimp brushed with rum molasses; and grilled chicken breast with roasted corn.

Strawberry Hill also offers a spa menu. Items such as grilled yellowtail snapper with mushroom-tomato broth and free-range grilled chicken breast on a bed of steamed callaloo with peanut wine sauce liven the palate without adding unnecessary calories or fat. We recommend this restaurant both for its spectacular view and for its innovative cuisine featuring Jamaican dishes with a culinary twist.

■ Seafood Restaurants

EL DORADO RESTAURANT
Terra Nova Hotel, 17 Waterloo Road, New Kingston
☎ 876-926-9334 or 876-926-2211
$$$
El Dorado is the fine dining option at Terra Nova, known for its seafood dishes as well as steaks. The air-conditioned restaurant is a favorite meeting place for the power lunch crowd and is open noon to 2:30 for lunch and 7 to 11 pm for dinner.

■ Steak House

BLUE MOUNTAIN INN
Gordon Town Road
☎ 876-927-1700 or 876-927-2606
$$$$
See listing under *Continental Cuisine*, above.

Nightlife

Kingston nightlife is legendary, starting with **Friday Night Jam**. This open-air street party begins when folks leave work on Friday night and go out into the street to buy the evening meal, to sit with friends and to take it easy. Ask for suggestions from your hotel staff before you head out on the town for the evening.

■ Discos

There are several well-known discos in Kingston. Top choices include **The Mirage** (106 Hope Road, Sovereign Centre, ☎ 876-978-8557) and **Peppers** (31 Upper Waterloo Road, ☎ 876-925-2219).

■ ■ ■

Appendix

Jamaican Music

More than any other Caribbean island, Jamaica's music has drawn an international audience. The reggae sounds for which this island is best known have worked like no tourist brochure ever could to introduce the world to this destination.

■ History

Reggae sings of the problems of the island, and to listen to its lyrics is to learn more about life in the villages beyond the resorts and most especially in the capital city of Kingston. Reggae was not the first music for which Jamaica was known, however. **Mento** was the music first brought to Jamaica from Africa. It became popular in the 1950s with groups like Pork Chops Rumba Box Band of Montego Bay and The Ticklers.

In the late 1950s, **ska** caught the public's ear with performers such as Don Drummond, Roland Alphanso, Lloyd Knibbs, Theophilus Beckford, Chuet Johnson and the Skatalites. The music is identified by the guitar emphasis on the upbeat, rather than the downbeat. Both mento and ska (as well as calypso, the music born in the southern Caribbean, especially Trinidad) worked together to form reggae.

Jamaica's best-known reggae performer was Bob Marley, who inspired generations of reggae musicians and whose legacy remains alive today, decades after his death. The political overtones of reggae came together with often sexually explicit lyrics to produce **dancehall**. Dancehall performers include Yellowman, Shabba Ranks, Wayne Smith, Echo Minott and Pad Anthony. Today music is a binding tie throughout Jamaica.

■ Performers

Bob Marley

Reggae legend Bob Marley was born in 1945 in the tiny town of Nine Miles, in St. Ann. At the age of 16, Marley released his first single, *Judge Not*. By 1963, Bob Marley, **Peter Tosh** and **Bunny Livingstone** formed The Wailers, originally. From the beginning, The Wailers were a success in Jamaica. It wasn't until 1972, when The Wailers signed with Chris

Blackwell's Island Records that they achieved international success. *Catch A Fire* was released in 1973 and brought the band to the United Kingdom and the US for concerts.

Soon after, Peter and Bunny (who changed his last name to Wailer) quit the group and Marley formed Bob Marley and the Wailers, a band that remained successful despite the changes. During the nearly 20 years Bob Marley entertained the world, he accepted such awards as the United Nations' Peace Medal and Jamaica's Order of Merit, one of the highest honors in Jamaica. In 1980, Marley was diagnosed with malignant cancer infecting his lungs and brain. He was flown home, but had to stop at a hospital in Miami en route, where he died at the age of 36. He is buried in his hometown of Nine Miles.

■ Marley Discography

Natty Dread Live!
Rastaman Vibration
Exodus
Kaya
Babylon By Bus
Survival
Uprising

Jimmy Cliff

One of Jamaica's best known musicians is Jimmy Cliff, who was born in St. Catherine in 1948. The singer was already well known for his reggae tunes in the late 60s, but reached an international audience in 1971 with the release of the movie *The Harder They Come*. The film, considered by many to be the best reggae movie ever produced, starred Cliff and also featured his songs *You Can Get It If You Really Want* and *Many Rivers to Cross*. Recently Cliff has worked on *The Lion King* soundtrack and continues to tour and perform.

■ Jimmy Cliff Discography

Higher & Higher
100% Pure Reggae
Super Hits
Reggae Man
Cool Runner: Live in London
Jimmy Cliff, Vol. 2
Many Rivers to Cross
Samba Reggae
Gold
In Brazil
Live 1993

Breakout
Reggae Greats
Images
Best of Jimmy Cliff
Reggae Spectacular
Fundamental Reggae
Hanging Fire
Cliff Hanger
Sense of Direction
Can't Get Enough of It
Power & the Glory
Special
Give the People What They Want
House of Exile
I Am the Living
Goodbye Yesterday
Oh Jamaica
Unlimited
Follow My Mind
In Concert: The Best of Jimmy Cliff
Brave Warrior
Pop Chronik, Vol. 9
Music Maker
Struggling Man
The Harder They Come
Another Cycle
Wonderful World, Beautiful People
Give Thanx
Jimmy Cliff
Hard Road

Burning Spear

Winston Rodney, aka the Burning Spear, was born in St. Ann's and is known for his reggae sounds. Assuming the name of an African freedom fighter, Burning Speak became not only a reggae performer but also a promoter of the late Marcus Garvey and his ideals.

Burning Spear released his popular album, *Marcus Garvey*, as a way to introduce listeners to the Garvey story and beliefs.

■ Burning Spear Discography

Burning Spear
Marcus Garvey
Garvey's Ghost
Man in the Hills

Dry and Heavy
live
Marcus' Children
Living Dub, Volumes I and II
Hail H.I.M.
Farover
Fittest of the Fittest
Resistance
People of the World
Mistress Music
Live in Paris
Mek We Dweet
Jah Kingdom
The World Should Know
Love and Peace
Rasta Business

Bunny Wailer

Winner of three Grammy awards in the 1990s, Bunny Wailer's musical history began a decade earlier with the formation of the Wailers in 1963. Known for their ska, rocksteady and reggae tunes, the group played through the early 70s. After the breakup in 1974, fellow band members Bob Marley and Peter Tosh went on to win international acclaim, while Bunny Wailer was primarily known in Jamaica.

■ Bunny Wailer Discography

Blackheart Man
Protest
Struggle
Dubd'sco Vol I
Hook Line'n Sinker
Rock and Groove
Rootsman Skanking
Sings the Wailers
Dubd'sco Vol 2
Tribute
In I Father's House
Live
Roots Radics Rockers Reggae
Marketplace
Liberation
Rule Dance Hall
Gumption
Just Be Nice

Dance Massive
Hall of Fame: Bunny Wailer's Tribute to Bob Marley's 50th Anniversary
Crucial! Roots Classics
Retrospective: Classic Tracks from a Legendary Artist
Time Will Tell: Tribute to Bob Marley

Yellowman

Winston Foster, aka Yellowman, is known for his dance hall songs during the 1980s and somewhat mellower sound in the 1990s. An albino, Yellowman became well known in the 80s. He sometimes can be seen performing in Jamaica (recently he was playing on the beach during one of our visits) and his songs are still energetic and oftentimes vulgar.

■ Yellowman Discography

One in a Million
Very Very Yellow Christmas
Reggae on the Move
Best of Yellowman
Zungguzungguguzungguzeng
King Yellowman
Yellow Like Cheese
Yellowman Rides Again
Ram Dance Master
Galong Galong Galong

Peter Tosh

Born in the small community of Belmont, Peter Tosh is still remembered by fans not only through his music but with a memorial at his former home. We visited on a recent South Coast trip and had the chance to enter the memorial.

Tosh's tomb lies above ground in the center of the small building, surrounded by photos of him throughout his career. Dedicated fans provide a look around the site; offer a tip in return.

Tosh came to Kingston at the age of 15 and soon met Bob Marley and Bunny Wailer, teaching the two guitar. Tosh became known in the world of ska music and had many hits during the mid-60s. By the mid-70s, each of the Wailers began a solo career.

Tosh performed at the 1978 One Love Peace Concert in Kingston and stopped his set to deliver harsh words to the Prime Minister and opposition leader; he later was attacked and beaten by local police. Although he was left for dead, Tosh recovered and went on to perform with Mick Jagger (*Don't Look Back*) and Eric Clapton (*Watcha Gonna Do*). In 1983, he

entertained audiences around the world in what was the longest reggae roadshow in history. He often traveled to Africa and won a Grammy for his *No Nuclear War* album.

On September 11, 1987, gunmen broke into his Kingston home and killed Tosh and two others. His funeral was held at the National Arena where he had performed at the controversial One Love Peace Concert a decade earlier.

■ Discography

The Best of Peter Tosh
Wisdom
Honorary Citizen
Negril
The Best of Peter Tosh: Dread Don't Die
The Gold Collection
Collection Gold
The Toughest
No Nuclear War
Captured Live
Mama Africa
Wanted Dread & Alive
Mystic Man
Bush Doctor
Equal Rights
Legalize It
Third World
96 Degrees in the Shade
Journey to Addis

Third World

Premiering in Kingston in 1974, this group was introduced to a larger audience when they opened for the Jackson Five at the Jamaica National Stadium. Soon they were offered a contract with Island Records' Chris Blackwell, also a Jamaican, to open for Bob Marley and The Wailers.

First known for their funk and reggae sounds, the group later went on to add dance hall.

■ Discography

Story's Been Told
Arise in Harmony
Prisoner in the Street
Rock the World
You've got the Power
All the Way Strong

Reggae Greats
Sense of Purpose
Hold on to Love
Serious Business
Committed
The Best of Third World
Reggae Ambassadors
Live It Up

Ziggy Marley

There's no doubt that the Marley name has helped the career of the legend's oldest legitimate son, but the works of Ziggy Marley have become reggae greats in their own right as well.

■ Discography

The Best of Ziggy Marley & the Melody Makers (1988-1993)
Fallen Is Babylon
Free Like We Want 2 B
Joy and Blues
Jahmekya
Conscious Party
One Bright Day
Conscious Party: Live at the Pal
The Time Has Come: The Best of Ziggy Marley & the Melody Makers
Hey World!
Play the Game Right

Dennis Brown

Sometimes referred to as the "Crown Prince of Reggae," Dennis Brown was known for his long career. In July 1999, the 42-year-old musician died of cardiac arrest at the University Hospital in Kingston.

■ Discography

Tribulation
Stone Cold World
Ready We Ready
Love Is So True
Live In Montreux
Godlike Genius of Dennis Brown
Generosity
Bless Me Jah
Believe in Yourself
Beautiful Morning

Watch This Sound
Tracks of Life
Prime of Dennis Brown-16 Cuts
He's One of a Kind
Ras Portraits
Got To Have Loving - The Dennis
Songs of Emanuel
Milk & Honey
Lover's Paradise
Love & Hate
Dennis
Crown Prince
Could It Be
Temperature Rising
Open The Gate
Nothing Like This
Money in My Pocket
Love Light
I Don't Know
And Friends
Vision of a Reggae King
Party Time
Light My Fire
Go Now
Early Days of
Collection - 20 Magnificent Blood Brothers
3 Against War
Unforgettable
Musical Heatwave 1972-75
Limited Edition
Legit
General
Some Like It Hot
Live in Montego Bay
Inseparable
Cosmic Force
Classic Hits
Victory is Mine
Sarge
Overproof
Go Now
Unchallenged
My Time
Greatest Hits

Hold Tight
Brown Sugar
Judge Not
Spellbound
Words of Wisdom
Visions
Another Day in Paradise

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www.atasteofjamaica.com

Association of Jamaica Attractions, Ltd.
www.attractions-jamaica.com

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www.westindian.com/backhome

Best of Jamaica - Worldwide Poll
www.jamaicans.com/bestofjamaica

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www.bluedanubetours.com

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www.whoyouknow.ca/links

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www.jamaicaresorts.com

Jamaica Stock Exchange - Financial Network
www.jamstockex.com

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www.jamaicathings.com

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www.yellow-net.com/jamaica.htm

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www.pacificnet.net/~jaweb/jaalumni/jaindex.html

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www.jamaicantrvlspecialist.com

JamaicaPlace (Jamaican books, music, videos, foods and more)
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www.JudiJamaica.com

Marzouca Marketing and Sales Ltd. (hotel outlet discount store)
www.marzouca.com

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www.in-site.com/sonrise

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www.superclubs.com

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www.sweet-jamaica.com

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www.montego-bay-jamaica.com/skal

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www.bestofjamaica.com

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www.jcoba.org

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www.jamaicans.com/faq.htm

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www.jamaicaobserver.com/JamaicaObserver/index.html

The NCB Group (National Commercial Bank Jamaica Ltd.)
www.jncb.com

Top Tours (tour operator specializing in Italian and Spanish tours)
www.toptours.com

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isis.uwimona.edu.jm

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